

Rich Nathan
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Lord, Teach Us to Pray
Matthew 6:9

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Many of you know that I have been doing a series on prayer here. A series that I have titled, "Lord, Teach Us to Pray." And over the last several weeks, we have been looking at the Lord's Prayer, which begins: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Now, last week when I began to teach on the Lord's Prayer and that first phrase, "Our Father in heaven" we discovered several things. First of all, we discovered that the Lord's Prayer is not simply meant to be prayed in a rote fashion, just mindlessly going through the prayer. You know, say four Our Fathers or let's just all repeat it together. It is not wrong, by the way, to say the Lord's Prayer, but the Lord's Prayer was meant to be a model prayer. In Matthew 6:9 Jesus said, "*This is how you should pray.*" In other words, "This is the way you should pray. This is the model for your prayers."

People say, "I don't know how to pray" and "I am not very good at praying", "How do I pray?"

Jesus says: Well, let me give you a simple outline for your praying, a way for you to structure what you need. Here's a track for you to run on. You don't need a prayer book to pray. It is not wrong to pray out of a prayer book, but you don't need a prayer book to pray. You don't need lessons and to read over the history of prayers. Jesus says the way of talking to God and the tracks for you to run on are really very simple.

I pointed out last week that according to the Lord's Prayer, the structure of our prayers is first of all to begin with God and then to turn after that to ourselves. We see in this model prayer that the first three petitions, the first three requests, are all about God.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Before we start talking about ourselves: Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, before we turn to ourselves, we lift up our eyes and focus them on God. Three specific requests right from the beginning about God's name, about God's reign and about God's will before turning to our needs.

Now, again, last week I pointed out the reason for this—why we begin with God before we turn to ourselves. And the reason, I believe, is because if we start with ourselves, we will never get past ourselves. So much of our difficulty in life is introspection. We analyze ourselves. We tunnel inward. We turn everything over in terms of our circumstances, in terms of our own emotions. So much, of America is absorbed with self. And it is very difficult to pray, which involves a dialogue with God, when you are carrying on a monologue with yourself. So, we must get past our own circumstances and past our own issues by lifting up our eyes and focusing them upon God.

What, then, is the first request made in this model prayer? We are beginning with God. What is the first thing that we ask regarding God?

The first thing that we ask, the first thing that we pray is "hallowed be thy name." Now, in order to understand what it is that a person is praying when they say, "Hallowed be thy name," I must talk with you for a few minutes about the meaning of names in the Bible.

You see, in the modern world, names generally don't mean anything except as an identifying tag. Names, today, are just labels that enable us to distinguish one person from

another. And it is interesting to look at how we name people. It appears that, at least in American culture, names of children go in cycles. We seem to be past the Jason, Justin, Christopher, and Kristen cycle of names where every fourth boy is named “Jason.” We have now swung way back to the names of our grandparents and great-grandparents. I read that the most popular names for babies now are names that we haven’t seen in two or three generations. Names like Sophie, Lillian, Matilda, Rose, May. I mean these were my great aunts! My grandmother was named Matilda. I never thought anyone would be named that again. But, apparently, Tilly is making a strong comeback.

And boys’ names are again reflective of the names popular in the teens of this century: Names like Harry, Max, and Norman. When I think of a Harry, I think of a guy with a short cigar in his mouth. It is hard to picture a baby—hey look at baby Harry! He has a cigar for a pacifier.

But names, generally, in our culture are just identifying tags. Oh, I realize that sometimes they have family significance. You might be named after an aunt or your father or after your grandmother or grandfather. George Foreman named all of his sons “George.” There is a strong family tradition in his family.

But an identifying tag, a way to distinguish one person from another, is not the meaning of names in the Bible. In the Bible, a person’s name represented something about that person’s character or inner nature. In other words, a person’s outward name showed something about their inward person, their inward character. Thus, for example, Eve named her two sons Cain and Abel. The name Cain means, “I have gotten a man” or “I have acquired/possessed a man.” What Eve is saying when naming Cain is, here is a man who is the essence of power and strength. Cain is going to be a real man’s man. And on the other hand, Abel means something like nothingness, emptiness, or frailty.

Now, the whole story of Cain and Abel is how God sees people differently and measures people differently than the world does, than their parents do. He reverses the fortunes of Mr. Great and Mr. Nothing. He sees Mr. Nothing's heart, his faith, and says, "You are great in my sight." And he sees Mr. Great's heart and he says, "In my sight, you are nothing."

Names in the Bible mean something. The patriarch Jacob was named Jacob because he was a grabber, a manipulator, and a finagler. That is what Jacob means, to grab for position and manipulate and twist.

Moses was named Moses because his name means to be drawn out or to be rescued. He was literally drawn out of or rescued from the Nile River. You saw the movie. You remember baby Moses floating down the Nile River and the Princess sends a servant girl to draw him out. His whole life was a life of drawing people out, of rescuing them. He was at birth, by his name, and by his destiny a deliver.

Names meant something in the Bible. And it was particularly significant when people's names were changed. Because when people's names were changed, it showed a change in their destiny and their character. The grabber, Jacob, the manipulator had his name changed to Israel, which means someone who struggles with God and was blessed. He was a man who wrestled with God.

Abram, whose name meant father, had his name changed to Abraham. That means he is going to be a father of many nations. Naomi in the story of Ruth says, "Don't call me Naomi" because her circumstances were poor. The name Naomi means pleasant. She said, "My name is no longer pleasant. Call me Mara which means bitter" because she is now living in bitter circumstances.

Perhaps the best-known example of a name change is that of Simon in the New Testament who was renamed by Jesus “Peter.” His new name, Peter, was from the Greek “Petrus.” The Aramaic “Cephas” which means, “Rock.” He came from a shaky background and became the rock.

Now, it is the case, occasionally, in America today that people’s names do signify something. Usually, we reserve that for nicknames. You know, in football we have: the Fridge for William Perry because he is like a refrigerator, “Mean Joe Green,” “Big Daddy Wilkinson,” “Broadway Joe Namath,” because Joe Namath was known for being a swinger, a carouser.

Probably the best names are found in wrestling and in stock car racing. I like some of the wrestling names: The Undertaker. That pretty much says what he is going to do to you. Bam Bam Bigelow. Or the tag team, The Nasty Boys. Psycho Sid Vicious. The British Bulldog. Razor Ramon.

How about these for stock car racers: Handsome Harry Gant, Dale-Ja Vu Jarrett. My favorite is Shirley Cha-Cha Muldowney.

The closest we come to any biblical understanding of names is when it comes to sports and entertainment where we nickname somebody according to their character, their inner nature, and the things that we want to say to represent them. Occasionally, we do the same thing with criminals, like Machine Gun Kelly, The 44-Caliber Killer, The Boston Strangler. Dr. Khavorkian has been renamed Dr. Death.

We are starting to tap a little bit into the biblical concept of name. It sums up the person. It is not just a label. It reveals who this person is. What their future is.

So, then, as we move back to the prayer, “Hallowed be thy name” we are referring to name in the way that the Bible does. Not as just a label, an identifying tag, a way to

distinguish God from a house, or a tree, or a fish—but as something that reveals God’s true character.

What does the Bible teach us about the name of God?

I think the first thing the Bible teaches is that God’s name can be known. You know, it is interesting that as people drift away from the Bible, God is referred to in more impersonal, more abstract ways. You see this in the writings of liberal theologians. God becomes the ground of all being, the depth of your life, your ultimate concern, what you take seriously without reservation. Whatever is your ultimate concern is God according to the theologians. In other words, as people move away from the Bible, what you see is God becoming nameless. More of an abstraction. God without a face.

This is what the ancient Greeks worshipped. They called God the nameless one. Acts 17 tells us that in Athens, the Greeks built a tomb to the unknown God. And as Jews moved away from the revelation in the Bible, they used to call God’s name the unutterable name, or just the name. Not personal at all. Hidden, obscure.

Over against these philosophical abstractions, the Bible teaches that God’s name is known. So when you pray, you don’t pray: ‘To whom it may concern. Dear Occupant of heaven. You know those letters you get when they don’t know your name. Dear New Car Owner. That is one greeting. It is very personal; I know they really care when they say this. Or I like the ones you get from your kids’ schools. Dear Parent of Westerville High School Student.

This is not the way it is with God. God’s name is known.

And God’s name, according to the biblical meaning of names, reveals his character. In other words, God’s name shows something about his inner being. It is not just his tag.

You look under G in the phone book and you find God, it is a tag, an identifying label. No. God's name reveals his person, what he is really like.

Now, there are some crucial names for God in the Bible that reveal what he is really like. I want you to turn to Exodus 3, one of the key texts about God's name. In Exodus 3, God meets Moses at a burning bush and calls Moses to be the deliverer of the nation of Israel. To go to Pharaoh and tell Pharaoh, "Let my people go." And in Exodus 3:13, Moses says to God: Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them "The God of your Fathers has sent me to you" and they ask me "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them? God said to Moses, "I Am who I Am." This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I Am has sent me to you.

Now the Hebrew name for God, Yahweh, sounds very much like the Hebrew words for "I am." What is God saying as he reveals himself as "I am?" Whole volumes have been written on this subject. I think there are a couple of possibilities that make sense to me. One possibility is that God is saying, "As I was with your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I will be with you." In other words, if you really want to know me, I am the one who is always there for my people. What does "I am" mean? It means, "I am there for you."

And Jesus picks this up when he calls himself Yahweh, I am. In the same way that I was there with Abraham, so am I there with my people today—in faithfulness, in keeping my promises, in upholding my people and being my deliverer.

Another way to think about this statement is that it may actually be properly translated in the future tense. Not "I am who I am" but rather "I will be what I will be." I am there for you and I will be there for you as a deliverer. You will know me when you find me as your deliverer.

Now, the Bible contains many names of God. Each of them revealing something of God's personality and his inner character. I don't know which name of God is most precious to you. But I would tell you that reading over and considering the names of God will be a great encouragement to your prayers.

A name that is special to me is El Roi. A name that was used by a woman in the Old Testament when she was in distress and God rescued her. A woman named Hagar. She said to God, "You are El Roi, the God who sees me. Not just who is aware of me, but God, you are a God who sees me and pays attention to me when I am in distress." It is wonderful to think that God in heaven pays attention to you and draws near to you when you have a problem.

What name of God is precious to you? God of all comfort; God of all grace; God of justice. Don't you like the fact that when you are ripped off, when there is no way for you to even the score, God names himself "Justice?" He is the ultimate vindicator. He is the one that will even all the scales in the end. He will make sure that justice is served because that is his name.

Or how about "God Our Peace." When you are totally overwhelmed and overwrought and anxious about some future possibility, you need God Our Peace. He's our peace, our Shalom.

God is the Wonderful Counselor when you need counsel. He's the Rock when you need security and safety. He is Abba when you need intimacy. Faithful when you need to count on him. Emanuel, which means God with us when you are alone.

Ultimately, God reveals his name as Jesus. A name, which means Savior. The name Jesus may be his greatest name. His most wonderful name, Jesus. Because this is who God fundamentally is, Savior, a Rescuer, a Deliverer.

When the Virgin Mary was told to give the Son in her womb the name Jesus, his destiny was to save his people from their sins. Every one of us needs God to be for us, Jesus, to save us from the penalty of our sins so that we will not face God in wrathful judgment. To save us from the power of our sins. We feel stuck and trapped by life-controlling habits. Who will rescue us from the power and the grip of addictive sins? Call on the name of Jesus. He not only saves us from the penalty of sin and the power of sin, but one day Jesus, when he returns, will save us from the presence of sin. We are not going to live with sin forever. One day our sinful bodies will be transformed and sin in the world will be burned up.

Which of God's names is most precious to you? To me, it may simply be Jesus. Savior.

Now, what does it mean to hallow God's name? Well, the prayer is not that God would be holy, or hallowed. What we are praying for is that God, his person, his character, his being would be regarded as holy throughout the world. In other words, that God would be esteemed. That God would gain for himself a great reputation. That people around us would regard God as wonderful as we know him to be. That folks around us would know Jesus as their Savior. Would know God as the God of all comfort. Would know God as the God who sees them.

When you pray, "hallowed be thy name", you are saying, God, I want you to have a great reputation. You know how people in school had a bad rep, or a great reputation? I don't know if that is true as much anymore. When I went to school, there were girls in High School who had a bad rep. They were involved sexually with lots of boys. And the good girls wanted to make sure that they preserved their good reputation.

Now, what we want of the Lord, what we are praying for when we pray “hallowed be thy name” is Lord, I want you to have a wonderful reputation and be regarded by the world as a great, kind and holy God by everyone far and near.

Now, listen, this is a fundamental premise of today’s talk—God cares about his reputation. God cares about his good name in the world. And it is not hard to understand why God would care about his reputation. He cares about it for the same reason that I care about my reputation. I care about my reputation so people will trust me. So that people would think about me in the right way. I know one of the things that most disturbs me as a pastor of a large church is that frequently viewpoints and statements are attributed to me when I never said those things, when I don’t feel those things, when they don’t reveal my heart. And I will have quoted back to me, as I did this week, some statement that I supposedly made and I asked the person, “Where did you hear that from?” Well, I heard it from so and so. I never said that. That statement put me in a bad light. It made me look like I was less than what I am.

Companies spend millions of dollars protecting their trade names so that people will trust the product that they are buying as being consistently of good quality. When you go to the store and you buy the Odd-Lots brand of cola, spelled K-O-L-A, you look at the stuff and in the bottle there is some kind of brown gunk in the bottle. It looks like a dissolved mouse. Coca Cola wants to make sure that you don’t attribute that product to their great company. And they zealously police this. When you go and order a Coke in the restaurants, you better not be getting a Pepsi or an Odd-Lots Kola. It better be the real thing.

You know what God’s fundamental motivation in the world is? To protect his reputation. To uphold his name so that around the world people will trust him for who he is. You see, all over the world people malign the name of God. They say, “Ah, you know,

who would want to be a Christian?” All over the world people suggest that God isn’t so great. Maybe you think that. God isn’t great or God doesn’t see. God is not with us. God is not our rock of security. God’s fundamental motivation is to gain for himself a proper reputation so that folks would regard God as God is.

I want to run through this for you. Why did God choose the Jewish people? Here is God in heaven and he is selecting out for himself of all the people on the earth, the Jews. He says, “I am going to make you a chosen people.” A lot of people say today, “What were they chosen for? Chosen for persecution? Chosen to be scattered? Chosen for unique hatred? Chosen for prejudice? What were they chosen for?

The Bible is quite clear in Deuteronomy 7 that the Lord didn’t choose the Jews because they were numerous. When he chose them they were the fewest of the people. There was just one of them, Abraham. He didn’t choose them because they were powerful. They were not. He didn’t choose them because they were holy or because they merited his choice. Why, then, were they chosen?

Psalm 106:7-8 lays out the reason for God’s choice and it says: *“When our fathers were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea. Yet he saved them for his name’s sake, to make his mighty power known.”*

God chose the Jewish people to spread his great reputation. He saved them for the sake of his name. 2 Samuel 7:23 says, *“And who is like your people Israel – the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt?”* God created the Jews so that people would stand back in awe and say, “What a great God. How wonderful he is. How kind. How generous to undeserving people. How gracious to people who have sinned.”

I want you to see this theme of God caring about his reputation so that people will trust him; it runs through the whole Bible. Why did God send ten plagues on Pharaoh? Why didn't he just drop the big one all at once? Nuke 'em? OK, Pharaoh, if you don't let them go, I am going to nuke you. I am going to blast you to kingdom come. I am going to blast you to the next planet.

You say, "Well, God was giving Pharaoh a chance to repent."

That's true.

And God is slow to anger. That's also true. And God is not willing that any should perish. He gives people a chance over and over again. He gives you a chance. He speaks to you repeatedly about your sins and he gives you a chance to repent before he pulls the plug. That's all true.

But in Romans 9:17, the Bible tells us the reason for the ten plagues. Romans 9:17 says, *"For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'raised you up for this very purpose, that I might be proclaimed in all the earth.'"* God wanted all of the surrounding nations to stand back and say, "Israel's God is different. He is not like the gods of the Philistines or the gods of the Babylonians or the gods of the Egyptians. Israel's God is more powerful. Israel's God is more wonderful. Israel's God is more awesome. He is the God of Gods, the Lord of Lords." God sent the plagues to gain a name for himself, a reputation for himself.

Did he gain a reputation for himself? As a God to be feared? As a God who works his purposes? He absolutely did gain a rep. His purpose did work. After the Exodus, when the Jewish people were entering the Land of Canaan, the Promised Land, Joshua sent some spies ahead of the Jews into the city of Jericho. These spies met a prostitute named Rahab. Here is what this prostitute said, living in this pagan culture as a prostitute, hundreds of miles from where the plagues occurred, Rahab goes and talks to the spies and says in Joshua 2:9-

11, *“I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great feat of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. [Now listen to this.] We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sibon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”* The reputation of God was so great that it reached out to Jericho and a prostitute there, the lowest of the low, and she got wind of this news that there was a God on the march who was doing battle for his people. He was a great God and we were afraid.

This is the reason, by the way, that God does everything: For his name.

In Ezekiel 20:8-9, God is speaking to a rebellious Jewish people. He tells them that they keep violating his laws, they keep turning from him, they keep rebelling, and a refrain is said over and over again: *“...So I said I would I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations they lived among and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt.”*

In other words, the reason I didn’t destroy you was because I was concerned about my reputation in the eyes of the world and I didn’t want the world to think that I couldn’t save you. That I was less than patient or less than merciful.

Friends, I am telling you, trace this little phrase through: For the sake of his name. You trace that phrase through the Bible and you will see that it is God’s motive for doing everything. For judging. For forgiving. For rescuing. For commanding the building of the temple.

And this, by the way, is Jesus’ motive. What was Jesus’ life all about? What was his goal in life? Jesus summed up his life in terms of upholding God’s reputation. He says in

John 17 on the night before he was going to the cross, “I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you had given me to do.”

And what was that work? John 17:6, “*I manifested your name to the men you gave me out of the world.*” I showed who you were, Father. I showed that there was a man on earth who would live entirely for you, but not only that, but who would reveal your inner character, who would show you to be faithful. Would show you to be a healer. Would reveal you to as one who is just. One who is sensitive to people who are broken. One who does not exclude people because of race or because of gender or their past sins. I showed your name the way your name ought to be shown. As a God who runs toward the repentant.

At the hour of his greatest sorrow, just before he was going to his death, Jesus was pondering his death and the very purpose of the death that he was going to die. What did he pray? He prays: Father, glorify your name. Use my death to spread your reputation through the world as a Savior. I don’t only want to live for you God, but I want to die for you. And die to uphold your reputation.

God responds and says: I have glorified it and I will glorify it.

And did the death of Jesus uphold the reputation of God? The Bible says in Romans 3 that God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice because in his forbearance, he had left sins committed beforehand unpunished. He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Christ Jesus.

God the Son cared about the reputation of God the Father. He was concerned that people in the world might begin to believe that the Father wasn’t just, that he just basically overlooked sin and doesn’t repay evil with punishment. He wanted to uphold God’s reputation so that when God said the person who sins will die, people would say, “That’s the

truth.” That God is not a God who winks at sin. Who says, “Well, it doesn’t matter. I am just a grandfatherly type and I don’t care what you do. Go ahead. I will forget what I said before.” God the Son cared about God the Father’s reputation for justice. And he went to the cross to demonstrate that, indeed, God is just and that sin is punished by death. So that when God said that sin had to be paid for by blood, sin would be paid for by blood. And when God said that there was no way to deal with sin but through shed blood and torn flesh, that God’s word would be upheld and that people would know that God speaks with integrity. Jesus died to uphold the name of God.

Now, let me ask you a question. God desires to uphold his reputation. Jesus lived and died to uphold the reputation of God. Whose reputation are you living for? Do you care about God’s reputation in this world? What are you willing to do to uphold God’s reputation and God’s name? What are you willing to do? How are you willing to change your lifestyle and your life so that people around you would say, ‘Your God is someone I can trust. Your God must be great. Because if he is anything like you, I want to get to know him.’”

Friends, living for the reputation of God is a major motive for cleaning up our acts. You say, “Hallowed be thy name. God, I want your reputation to be respected. And yet, it is the truth that much of what we do profanes the name of God, to use a Bible expression. Some of our behavior tears down the reputation of God. How many times do you hear someone say, “Well, you know, I got some work done on my car from a Christian mechanic. He advertises himself to be a Christian, but he ripped me off.”

“I just was given a ruthless sales-pitch by a Christian Amway distributor. I know the guy was a Christian, but he invited me over to his house and there was a bait and switch.”

“This Christian financial planner wouldn’t let me off the hook.”

It is for this reason that pastors who sin publicly do such a terrible thing. You know, we know that all pastors sin. All people sin. But why is it so terrible when a pastor commits significant immorality? Why? Why is it so terrible when a pastor embezzles money or commits adultery or does something like some of the tele-evangelists did? What is so terrible about it?

What is so terrible is because when pastors sin or Christians in business sin, they do what Paul writes about in Romans 2:23-24 when he says, *“You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: ‘God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’”*

What is so terrible is that the Gentiles, the people of the world, hear reports about a Christian’s sins and they laugh and mock the name of Jesus. We have a reputation, Christian, to uphold. And it is not our reputation, it is God’s reputation. That when God comes into a person’s life, he changes us. He cleans us up. That the touch of God in your life makes a difference. That to be associated with Jesus changes you and makes you more honest and grants you more integrity and calls you to be more admitting about who you are.

The reason to live a clean life is not just because you will be happier and healthier, although you will be happier and healthier, it is to maintain the reputation of God. Parents, this is the reason why you should rouse yourselves to pray in the morning, to read your Bible, to hold up a Christian witness in your home—for the reputation of Jesus before your kids. You claim to be a Christian. You drag your kids to church. How do you live when you are alone, in private? What do your kids see? Don’t do it just for yourselves, do it for the sake of God. Sacrifice for the sake of God. Give money for the sake of God. Serve for the sake of God, for his reputation.

You say, “Well, Rich, what are the practical implications of this whole business of ‘Hallowed by thy name?’ What does this mean for me?”

Well, certainly, it means you clean up your life. You try to live in a better way. But this business of God’s supporting his own reputation is a basis of confidence in your praying. Have you ever read something in the newspaper or heard something on TV where as a follower of Christ you just found yourself offended, hurt, embarrassed because of what they were saying about Christians? Have you ever heard someone really blast Christianity?

The host of 20/20, grandfatherly Hugh Downs said not too long ago, “During times of social stress, humanity regresses into the family. In the 1920’s the Ku Klux Klan urged people to adopt family values and to return to old time religion. Similarly, Adolph Hitler launched a family values regiment. Hitler’s methodology centered on his ideas of motherhood. Fanatics in the Ku Klux Klan, the Nazi Party, the Hezbollah, or any other intolerant organization referred to themselves as ‘religious warriors.’ As warriors, fanatics censor the thoughts of others. They love to burn books. And in the United States, in the 90’s, new proponents of family values continue this tradition of fear and intolerance.”

Grandfatherly Hugh Downs is saying that Christians who support family values ought to be lumped in with the Ku Klux Klan, with Hezbollah, with Adolph Hitler. That we are intolerant. That we hate people. That we are book burners.

What do you do when you hear this kind of talk about Christianity? What do you do when you look out at the church and you say, “You know, God, as I look at the church of America, there are so many hypocrites, there is so much immorality, there is so much bondage and brokenness. How do you pray when your heart is weighed down? When things look bad?” You are walking around OSU and there is man preaching on the Oval

who just embarrasses you. People are mocking him and he is yelling back at them. How do you pray for OSU?

Here is the ultimate ground of confidence in your prayers. Here is how you pray when you are distressed, when folks put down Christianity, when you look out at the world and everything seems bleak, here is how you pray: “God, act for the sake of your name.” This is how people in the Bible prayed and prayed with confidence.

“Act because of your name and your reputation, God.”

“God, we need your mercy.”

“God, we need to experience your goodness.”

“God, do it for your people.”

“God, do what we need out of love.”

But you know, you can pray all those things and feel like, “Has God heard my prayer?” There is one great prayer that you can pray and know that God hears and will answer. When you are distressed about the situation in the world or in the church or in your family or with one of your kids or at your job, pray the way the people in the Bible prayed: God, act for the sake of your great name. Intervene to preserve your reputation.

In Joshua 7, the people of Israel have just been defeated in battle. Joshua looks out at the defeat of the people of Israel, in the same way you may look out at the defeat of people regarding the abortion issue, or the defeat of the church regarding issues of sexual morality, or regarding euthanasia—you feel like Joshua. This is how Joshua prayed. Joshua 7:6-7 says, *“Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell face down on the ground before the Ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads. And Joshua said, ‘Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!’”*

[Lord, what can I say now that the church has been run into the ground by secularism? Lord, what do we say now that the church in Russia is threatened again by resurgent Communism? What can we say now about the church plants that we are supporting in India that are being threatened by militant Hinduism? That Christians are being killed in Iran and in Somalia? And most particularly, today in the Sudan, Christians are being enslaved and slaughtered. Christian women are being raped? What shall we say? Listen to Joshua's prayer...] *The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and will surround us and wipe us out. Wipe out our name from the earth.* [And here is the key] *What then, Lord, will you do for your own great name? Lord, I ask you to work for the sake of your reputation."*

Moses prayed this way when everything else was collapsing around him. The people were grumbling in the desert. The Lord said to Moses, *"I am going to wipe out the Israelites from the face of the earth."* How did Moses pray? Numbers 14:13-16 says, *"Moses said to the Lord, /Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O Lord, are with these people and that you, O Lord, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, 'The Lord was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.'"* God, if your people get defeated, you are going to gain a reputation as not having the ability to accomplish what you promised. Don't do it for us, do it for the sake of your reputation. Act. Let people in the world stop mocking you."

Do you want to get confident in prayer? Pray that God would act for the sake of his name. This is God's motivation. This is Jesus' motivation. This is to be our motivation. This is the source of our confidence in prayer. Uphold your reputation, God.

And, as I have said on numerous occasions, this is the basis of world missionary activity. That your name, O God, would be hallowed. That people around the earth would revere you, would respect you, and would know you to be the kind of God that we know you to be.

Why do we, as a church, get involved in world missions? What motivates people in this church to go to a little remote place in Indonesia? Or to spend years serving on the Amazon as Janette Ryan does? What motivates our Indian friend, A. Stephen, an educated man to go to some people groups in the middle of India somewhere to preach the gospel, to have his vans burned and workers stoned? What motivates another couple from this church, Jim and Sara Meyer, to spend their youth in the middle of Singapore traveling around to film hidden people groups? Or the Sapersteins to want to travel to Central Asia?

Why get involved in world missions? The Psalmist says, “All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord. They shall glorify your name.”

It is for the sake of his name that people leave comfort and get involved in world missions. That was Paul’s motivation. In Romans 15:20-21 it says: *“It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation. Rather, as it is written: ‘Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.’”*

The reason we go to unreached people groups is so that they will appreciate and fall in love with Jesus. This is the mainspring of world missions. For the sake of his name.

Last scripture: Isaiah 66:19—this is why we have people working with Internationals at OSU, like Rich Mendola and Drew Alatis and others. Isaiah 66:19 says, *“I will set up a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations – to Tarshish, to the Libyans and*

Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations.”

Sermon—May 18-19, 1996
Lord, Teach Us to Pray
Matthew 6:9

Rich Nathan

Hallowed Be Thy Name

I. The Meaning of Names

II. The Value of Knowing God's Name

A. God's Name is Known

B. God's Name Reveals His Character (Exodus 3:14-15)

C. God's Name Signifies His Reputation

III. Whose Name Do You Care About?

A. God Cares About God's Name (Ezk. 20)

B. Jesus Cares About God's Name (Jn. 17:4, 6; Rom. 3:25-26)

C. Christians Care About God's Name (Col. 3:17)

IV. Praying "For the Sake of God's Name" (Joshua 7:6-9; Numbers 14:10-19)

V. World Missions For the Sake of God's Name (Rom. 15:20-21; Is. 66:19)