

## **The Lord's Prayer (2) - Hallowed be Thy name**

In this series of talks on the Lord's Prayer we come to consider the meaning and implications of the words, "**Hallowed be Thy name**". The Lord's Prayer commences, "Our Father who art in the heavens", and continues, "Hallowed be Thy name". Like a great many people you have probably said these words on countless occasions. The question is, What do they mean? What should we be thinking about as we say them? When we pray, "Hallowed be Thy name", what, in fact, are we saying?

The general understanding of these words which people have is that they refer mainly to speech and conversation, and that they involve a commitment not to use the name of the Lord unnecessarily or lightly, in anger or amazement, or to express frustration or annoyance. 'To hallow' means to honour something, and to set it apart from common use; to exalt and reverence it. And so it should be in regard to the names of the Lord. Whereas those names are associated with or should only be associated with what is good and uplifting, and should stir within us our finest emotions, sadly, and by their misuse, they become associated with what is bad and degrading, and are used instead to express our basest emotions.

And yet, valid and important as it is, and though granted that in general terms this is what is meant by the words, 'Hallowed be Thy name', clearly much else is involved. Think of the petition, as we normally do, in terms of the names by which God is known and by which we address Him, yet we must not overlook the wider and deeper implications that it carries; implications which arise in connection with a fuller appreciation of precisely what is meant by the name of the Lord.

That more is involved is evident when we stop to consider other references to the Lord's name which appear elsewhere in the Bible. There are statements made which are inexplicable, but the name of the Lord is to be understood other than as a term or a title. As in John 14:14 "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." And, further on in chapter 16:23 "my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." How many prayers have been offered, how many things have been asked, apparently in the Lord's name, and yet these things have not been received? Was the Lord mistaken then? Has He misled us here? We cannot accept this. Rather is it that His words are to be understood in some other manner.

What is it about a name that you like or dislike? Some names have certain associations and others have other associations. And those associations are based on traits of character and certain qualities which you have found desirable or undesirable in other people. Names, even in this world, come to suggest and stand for certain qualities which come to mind when they are mentioned and thought about. If amongst Christians I mentioned the name 'Judas', for example, I could confidently guess the associations and qualities of character this would bring to their minds. And if I mentioned the name 'Peter' other qualities would doubtless come to mind. Names become synonymous with certain qualities. They come to embody those qualities; to stand for them, to represent them.

Concerning the name of God, Swedenborg wrote of it that where mentioned in the Word it signifies His Divine quality; that it is to be thought of and understood as embodying all that proceeds from Him, all of those things we associate with Him. All that proceeds from the Lord, all those qualities for which He is worshiped, all that which makes Him known unto us. These things are what are meant by His name. His love and His wisdom, His goodness and His truth. These are the name of the Lord.

"If" the Lord said "if you ask anything in my name, I will do it". But we can see now how we are to understand this. If we think it is merely a matter of quoting a title or using some ritual formula in our prayers then we are not going to get very far and will soon be disappointed. Millions of prayers have been asked in the Lord's name, so called, rounded off with a standard formula, to no avail. However, to ask in the Lord's name means to ask in accordance with His love and wisdom. It means to ask those things which fit in with what He purposes for us and which are within His Divine order. It is to ask for His eternal blessings, and not for short term worldly benefits which are not in accordance with His love or with His wisdom. If I ask for revenge on my neighbour, though I finish my prayer with the familiar formula, I have not asked in the Lord's Name. I have not asked in accordance with the qualities I know and understand He possesses. I have not asked for something which accords with His love and wisdom. I have not asked in His name. If we ask anything in His name, for those things which are of His love for all people, which identify with His concern for our spiritual growth and lasting happiness, He will do it.

All people in the spiritual world are named according to their quality, and that name is what tells others about them. The mention of a name there brings to mind the qualities which the person must possess. So with the Lord His name merely stands for and represents all His Divine qualities - His creativeness, His mercy, His power against evil, His love and His wisdom, His goodness and His truth. These are what are meant.

But how to hallow them? This now is the question. We can talk of God's creativeness, but how do we hallow it? We can speak of His love and goodness but again, how do we hallow them?

Let us take His love and goodness first of all. We hallow these when we allow them to flow through us, untainted, into the world and into all our relationships with other people. We hallow the Lord's love when we invite it into those relationships, into the relationship between husband and wife, parent and child, friend and companion. We hallow it by not claiming it to ourselves, by not claiming that we are the author of goodness where goodness has been in evidence. Though but one aspect, here is what we are saying when we pray, "Hallowed be Thy name".

And then there is the Lord's truth, hallowed when we listen to it as He Himself speaking to us; hallowed when we take it to ourselves and humble ourselves to be guided by it; hallowed when we accept it for what it teaches. "Hallowed be Thy name".

We fail to hallow the Lord's name when we treat His Word disparagingly, when we joke about the Bible, and make a mockery of things and events which are written there. Again, we fail to hallow His name if we are insincere in our worship. For these things also are His name. These are things which tell us about Him, which speak of Him, which bring to mind His qualities.

The implications, as you can see, are enormous! So many things are meant. So much is involved. We shall not think of them all every time we repeat the prayer. There isn't the time we recall them. But different aspects will come to us at different times.

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