

Daily Readings from the Life of Christ, Vol. 1 (5-22-2012)

May 22 - God's Will: Two Misunderstandings

Two polar opposite views of God's will can cause Christians to have faulty understandings of prayer and the accomplishing of God's purposes. On the one hand, some see His will as absolutely deterministic—whatever will be, will be. They either pray little at all, figuring the divine will is inevitable, or they are resignedly obedient, praying for God's will simply because He tells them to.

Neither approach to prayer demonstrates faith. Viewing God's sovereignty in a fatalistic, prayerless way robs us of the joy of aligning our wills with His and seeing His will done as we pray in faith. And praying with passive resignation leads to a weak, unexpectant prayer life. It is one that doesn't heed Jesus' instruction in the parable of the persistent widow: "He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1).

Other believers overemphasize the role of human will and see prayer as mainly a way to twist God's will to their own desires. They think of God's will as what He dispenses from His cosmic vending machine—they get whatever they want by inserting a claim on one of His promises. But our Lord rejects such a false, man-centered concept throughout the model prayer. Genuine prayer focuses on God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will. The emphasis remains on the Father. God is sovereign, but Jesus tells us to pray that His will be done (cf. James 5:16).

Ask Yourself

Which of these two misunderstandings has been the hardest for you to counteract? Which one do you find yourself gravitating toward in your usual dealings with God? How has this led you to defeat and discouragement in your walk with Christ? What would you gain from embracing a more biblical mind-set?

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