

Thy Will be Done

(The Prayer of Relinquishment vs. Resignation)

Commit [roll and repose each care of your load on Him]
your way [life journey, path, direction, course of life] to the Lord;
trust (lean on, rely on, and be confident) also in Him
and He will bring it to pass.

Psalms 37:5 (AMP)

Portion for the Journey

"Thy Will Be Done!" It sounds so easy, doesn't it? One could arrive at the mistaken conclusion that one is able to pray a nice, neat little prayer to commit our way to God, but it is often not as simple as that, especially when the issues before us contain matters concerning our very life and deepest desires. Abraham laid his precious son upon the altar, an act of obedience that seemed to go against all of God's promises, everything he had prayed for and sought over the course of his entire life. David fled his rule and kingdom, laying it all down and trusting God to restore it, if it was God's will.

But we have a greater model of this same principle in Jesus Christ, our Savior, who also faced a gruesome death on the cross. His agony is very real as He relinquished Himself to the Father's will, laying down His desires, needs, and comforts to whatever the Father chose as best for Him. We are all familiar with the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane in which Jesus sweat drops of blood as He agonized and cried out to the Father, "Not My will, but Thy will be done." (Luke 22:42)

Can we commit our heart's desires, cares, needs -- even our very lives to Jesus? Do we absolutely trust Him with our very lives? The word for "commit" found in Ps. 37:5 and Prov. 16:3 means, "to roll off or roll onto, to roll away or remove." In Gen 29:3, the word refers to the rolling of a stone from the well's mouth. In these verses, the reader is encouraged to roll his works into God's care. The word is related to the action of a camel, burdened with a heavy load, when it is time for the load to be removed, he will kneel down so the load tilts far to one side, and literally rolls off. This is the root of the same word from which "Golgotha" was derived. Can we commit our load to the One who carried it to the cross on our behalf?

Every verse in which we are instructed to commit our way to the Lord, is immediately followed by a promise of God's faithfulness and trustworthiness.

"Commit your way to the LORD [roll off and repose each care of your load on Him], Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. [He will work, He will work for you.]" Ps. 37:5

"Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you [maintain, nourish, provide food, bear, hold up, protect, support, defend, provide the means necessary for living.] He will never permit the righteous to be moved [shaken]." Ps. 55:22

"Commit your works to the LORD, and your plans will be established." Prov. 16:3

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all ways acknowledge Him[through direct intimate contact with Him], and He shall direct your path." Prov 3:4-6

*"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD.
"For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream
And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green,
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit.*

Jer. 17:7-8 (NASB77)

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Phil 4:6-7

*"And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places,
And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail." Isaiah 58:11 (NASB77)*

Relinquishment vs. Resignation:

When we commit our lives to the LORD, we also place in His hands all of our fears, dreams and expectations. We become willing to accept even the "worst case scenario" because our trust is in His faithfulness no matter what happens. This is the fabric of the proclamation made by Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego when they faced the fiery furnace, saying, "He will deliver us out of your hand, O King, but even if He does not..." (Daniel 3:17,18) Or for Job to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I wait for and trust Him..." Job 13:15 (AMP) In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy will be done..."

Another word for "commit" or "cast upon" is "relinquishment." All three aspects of the dictionary definition of relinquishment are required for true relinquishment to take place. It is important to understand that we don't just give these up, but that we give them to the LORD! These include:

1. to surrender our will and our rights
2. to put aside our plans and expectations
3. to loose our hold on something or someone

To relinquish our will to God is very different from resignation or abandonment. Resignation speaks of "giving up," "quitting," or "surrendering to fate" but does not have the aspect of faith necessary for relinquishing that which is ours to the LORD. I am sure you have heard a teenager say, "OK, whatever...!" Resignation comes from hardening one's heart in rebellion. Words of resignation are full of "attitude" while relinquishment comes from a heart that surrenders to God's will in humility, love and submission. Relinquishment trusts God for the outcome, even when it goes against our own will and desires. In relinquishment, we learn how to "be still" and know that He is God.

The "prayer of relinquishment" is characterized by the willingness of the individual to be made willing, to lay down all needs, desires, expectations, even one's own life, in total trust of the Father and His will. It is a prayer that tests the ultimate level of our trust in the Father by committing all that we have, all that we are and all that we will be to His perfect will. In relinquishment, our faith in the Father grows

stronger because we place ourselves securely in His hands. In resignation, we give up in a time of battle and become passive. We walk away from God sad. We forsake our faith and determine to blindly accept whatever happens without hope in God's character and eternal goodness. Resignation goes hand in hand with a victim mentality. Resignation quits and has no hope.

There are times when we pray and sense that God is saying "no," that we need to relinquish our desires to His will. Paul described such a situation in 2 Cor. 12:7-9 in which he relinquished his desire for freedom from an undisclosed torment, stating, "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.**"

Anything that separates us from God and walking in His will for our lives must be given up. This can include things that seem to be good. Sometimes this relinquishment focuses upon making the difficult choice to relinquish someone we love to the LORD. This is often very hard because we have a sense of loyalty or feeling of godly responsibility for this person. The Bible gives several examples of godly mothers being forced to relinquish their children in obedience to the LORD. Hannah, (1 Samuel 1:27,28), and the mother of Moses (Exodus 2) are two godly women who by faith followed the instructions of the LORD over their own sense of responsibility to their children.

Relinquishment is never easy. Abraham's faith was tested by his willingness to obey the LORD's command to offer Isaac, his only child (Gen. 22:5). When Jesus called his disciples, He made it clear that we are to leave all earthly ties to follow Him. This included parents, children, homes, businesses and even our lives. (Matt. 8:18-22, Luke 9:59-60)

I first heard of the power of the prayer of relinquishment many years ago, when reading a series of books written by Catherine Marshall, ("Something More," "Beyond Ourselves," and "Meeting God at Every Turn") Catherine wrote as a friend speaking into my life. She grappled with the same questions I had regarding the practical application of my spiritual walk in day to day situations. Many of the insights I have gained regarding the "Prayer of Relinquishment" were introduced in Catherine Marshall's books. She states, "...it is a way of prayer that has consistently resulted in glorious answer, glorious because each time power beyond human reckoning has been released." She describes her first experience with this form of prayer when she had contracted tuberculosis in 1943 and there was no effective medical treatment or cure. She poured out prayers for healing before the throne, stood on all the faith she could muster, had been anointed by the elders, proclaimed God's healing power, but no amount of effort made in persistent prayer seemed to make a difference. She was dying. She was so tired of fighting and carrying the burden of praying for her life. She reached a point of acceptance. The prayer she prayed went something like this,

"Lord, I am tired of asking. I am beaten, finished. God, You decide what You want for me the rest of my life. If you want me to die or be an invalid for the rest of my days, I give it to You. I belong to You. I want You more than I want to live...more than I want health. I give it all to You. You decide."

She said that as she prayed, she expected nothing. Her gift of her sick self was made without any trace of graciousness, but it was real. What happened was completely surprising. In her own words, she describes it, "The result was as if the windows had opened in heaven, as if some dynamo of heavenly

power had begun flowing, flowing into me. From that moment my recovery began." She was fully healed. She felt that through this experience God had begun teaching her something about prayer. Some of these lessons that she learned are summarized below:

- A demanding spirit, that prays "God, I want such and such, this is what I want You to do for me..." is not real prayer and receives no answer. When we pray with a demanding spirit, God will often seem remote and unapproachable.
- We may try to dictate to God what we need, based on the premise that it is His will, maybe even something we have dedicated to God and believe to be God's will for our life. Many times even "good things" including a path of service to God need to be surrendered to God's will. Martha is an example of one who believed she was in God's will and who made a demanding request of Jesus. She was rebuked and shown a better way.
- God absolutely refuses to violate free will and unless self-will is voluntarily given up, even God cannot move to answer prayer. When our will is set on a certain outcome and not submitted to God's will we can receive answers that are not in our own best interest, ie. Israel's demand for a king, Samson's demand for the Philistine wife.
- Fear blocks prayer. Fear is a barrier that is erected between God and ourselves that is the opposite of faith. When we fear a certain outcome, we dread that what we fear most is about to come upon us. Only strong measures can deal with such a powerful fear. Turning one's thoughts to the positive or repeating affirmations is not enough.
- We are able to relinquish the desires of our heart to Him when we trust in His absolute goodness, even if the answer is not what we might want. We are instructed to "resist not evil" but to face what we fear most in the light of His love and power. "Jesus is saying, 'admit the possibility of what you fear most. And lo, as you stop fleeing, as you force yourself to walk up to that fear, as you look it full in the face, never forgetting that God and His power are still the supreme reality, the fear evaporates.'"
- The prayer of relinquishment is not a contradiction to believing faith that God will answer our prayers. True faith is nothing more than actively and completely trusting God for His highest and best.
- Relinquishment is not the same thing as resignation to whatever happens to us. Resignation says "grievous circumstances have come to me. There is no escaping them. I am only one creation. I have no heart left even to rebel. So I'll just resign myself to what apparently is the will of God; I'll even try to make a virtue out of patient submission." So resignation lies down quietly in the dust of the universe from which God seems to have fled, and the door of Hope swings shut." Acceptance says, "I trust the good will, the love of my God. I'll open my arms and understanding to what He has allowed to come to me. Since I know that He means to make all things work together for good, I consent to this present situation with hope for what the future will bring." Acceptance leaves the door of hope wide open to God's creative plan. Only in acceptance lies peace--not in resignation, busyness, or forgetting. His will is good, and perfect and acceptable. Acceptance is creative, resignation is sterile and empty. Resignation is barren of faith in the goodness of God.
- Weariness of body and spirit are often the turning points in which we come to the point of laying down our demands and allowing God to take the burden from us.
- When we pray the prayer of relinquishment and reach a place of full surrender, we are able to enter into His rest, finding a place of freedom from fear, peace and joy, even when we do not yet know how He will answer. "The act of placing what we cherish most into His hands is to Him the sweet music of the essence of faith."
- When our relinquishment to His will is complete, He will bring the breakthrough's that we need.

(See Rom. 12:1-2; Ps. 55:22; Prov. 16:3; 1 Pet. 5:7; Matt. 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31; Ps. 37:24)

In conclusion, what happens when we come to a place of relinquishment in our lives?

1. Relinquishment allows us to rest upon God's character and sovereignty over our lives and the lives of others. We realize that we may not know what is best or perfect in God's eternal plan which sees far beyond present circumstances and operates according to His eternal purposes.
2. Relinquishment can only come when we acknowledge that He is God and we are not. His ways are higher than our ways and we do not know what is best for our own lives or the lives of others.
3. We acknowledge our own helplessness and inability to realize the highest and best purposes for our lives and our need to let God assume control of the reins of our life.
4. We surrender our expectations for how we want things to turn out. We choose to trust Him and the truth that He loves us. In relinquishment we give Him 100% freedom to act even if He would chose an outcome that we, ourselves do not want.
5. Along with this we give up all efforts to control circumstances and trust in the work of the Holy Spirit to carry out God's perfect will. We completely let go!

Ultimately, the prayer of relinquishment to God's will is a place of complete trust in our LORD and Savior and the elimination of all fear of whatever might happen. It allows us to tangibly demonstrate our trust in His Love for us and for those whom we love. It is a trust in His higher purposes and ways that will only be revealed as we enter into eternity. True relinquishment brings the peace that passes all understanding.

Our Response to God:

1. Ask the LORD to show you any areas where you need to relinquish all of your efforts to His perfect plans:

LORD, please show me any place in my life where I am placing expectations on You based on my will rather than Your Will. Show me any areas that I have not submitted completely to You. LORD, I want You more than anything else. Open the eyes of my understanding to see any hidden areas of my heart that are seeking to control circumstances or outcomes. Show me any idols in my life and uncover any relationships that are out of balance. Help me to truly relinquish everything in my heart to You.

2. Clearly state what you are relinquishing to Him. Pour out your heart to Him.

LORD, I want to bring _____, to You. I confess that I have been trying to control the outcome of _____ situation. I have not been willing to trust You with _____. I lay down all of my expectations and attempts to control what happens next. Set me free from the patterns and habits in my life that have caused me to hold fast to _____ and refuse to accept a life without _____. I trust You and love You and desire You more than _____. Please forgive me and cleanse me. Thy will and not my will be done!

Prayer of Relinquishment

*Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you.
May your will be my delight throughout the day.*

May your way have perfect sway in me.

May your love be the pattern of my living.

I surrender to you my hopes,

My dreams, my ambitions.

Do with them what you will, when you will, as you will.

I place into your loving care

My family, my friends, my future.

Care for them with a care that I can never give.

I release into your hands

My need to control,

My craving for status,

My fear of obscurity.

Eradicate the evil, purify the good,

And establish your kingdom on earth.

For Jesus' sake,

Amen