

Hallowed Be Thy Name

I can remember reciting what is known as the Lord's Prayer in my youth during church services and in prayers. But it was not until I was an adult that I learned the prayer should really be called the Disciple's Prayer because Jesus would never have asked for His sins to be forgiven. The prayer is a model of how we should pray. If we examine the prayer closely, we find that the first two verses of the prayer are about the Father, and the last three verses are about us. This morning, I will focus on the first verse which is Matthew 6:9. But I will start by reading verses 9-10.

"Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:9-10 (NASB)

ASK THAT THE FATHER MAKE HIMSELF HOLY. In my younger years when I heard "Hallowed be Your Name," I thought of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. In his address, President Lincoln said, "We cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground." When he said "Hallow," the word seemed to refer to something special. But later as an adult, I looked up the meaning of the Greek word that is translated as "hallowed" in Matthew 6 and I discovered it is

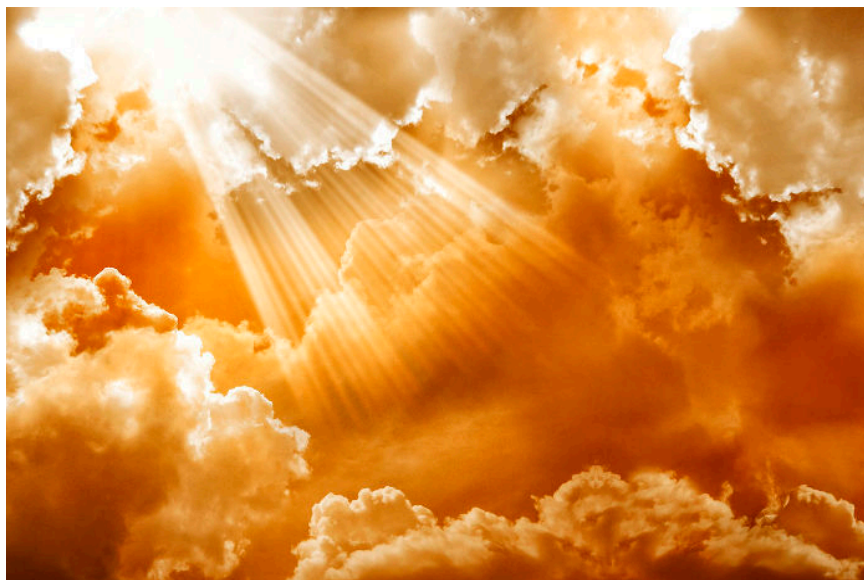
hagiazō. It has the idea of "to make holy" or "to sanctify". The noun form of this Greek word means "saints" or "holy ones." This means, we are to ask—that the Father be made holy.

MOSES MEETS GOD ON HOLY GROUND. But this raises a question. What does this mean? I want to answer this question by giving you an illustration. Therefore, please turn to Exodus 3:1-5. This passage tells us that one day Moses was pasturing a flock near the mountain of Horeb and God spoke to him out of a burning bush that was not being consumed. So, Moses was very curious. When he approached to investigate, God told him to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. Now I have a question for you, "Why was the dirt, rocks and weeds described as holy?" The answer is that God, who is holy, holy holy! was present!

MOSES IS GOD'S MINISTER IN THE DESERT. It was there in the Midian desert, that God called Moses to become His minister in the desert. His ministry was to take the nation of Israel from Egypt into the Promised Land. That seemed to be simple and straight forward. But when Moses objected, he lost part of his ministry to his brother Aaron, when God made Aaron Moses' spokesman. This gives us an important lesson. We must be careful what we refuse to do for God, because

God might then give it to someone else to do and we then could lose the blessing of serving our Lord. For Moses, God took away part of his ministry, but He did not allow Moses to forsake all of it.

Eventually, Moses accepted God's call, and he became God's minister in the desert. God began



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performing miracles through him. I am sure that Moses was thrilled with the miracles God did through him. Eventually, the pharaoh of Egypt let the nation of Israel leave Egypt after his firstborn son died. When pharaoh changed his mind and sent the Egyptian army after the Israelites, we are told that God rescued the Israelites by using a pillar of cloud, a pillar of fire, and by parting the Red Sea. Then God did even more miracles to provide food, water, and the very soles of the Israelites' shoes. At this point, I am confident that Moses must have been glad that he had agreed to be God's minister in the desert. I am sure he was thrilled with the ministry that God had given him.

But when Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, something bad happened. Moses sent twelve spies to spy-out the land. When the spies returned, ten of them convinced the people it was too dangerous to trust God and enter the Promised Land. The leeks, onions, and garlic in Egypt were much better. As a result, Numbers 14:28-32 says that God punished the unbelieving Israelites by not allowing anyone who was twenty years of age or older into the Promised Land, except for four men: Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua. So, the nation of Israel wandered in the desert for a total of forty years until the unbelieving had died.

MOSES SINS IN THE WILDERNESS OF ZIN. But when the last year of their wanderings arrived, two tragic events occurred. First, Numbers 20:1 tells us that the nation of Israel arrived in the Wilderness of Zin and then Moses' sister Miriam died. She died because she was one of the unbelieving who could not enter the Promised Land. I imagine Moses was very grieved over the death of his sister.

Next, verses 3-5 say the nation contended or quarreled with Moses and Aaron. Just as they had complained in the Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1-7), they complained now in the Wilderness of Zin that there was nothing to eat or drink.

Now that was bad news. But, Numbers 20:6-8 gives us even worse news. Verse 6 says that Moses and Aaron went to the Lord to seek His direction. As I read, please notice four things that God told Moses and Aaron to do.

Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them; and the LORD spoke

to Moses, saying, Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." Numbers 20:6-8 (NASB)

Now as I read verses 9-11, notice what Moses actually did. Here are verses 9-11,

So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. Numbers 20:9-11 (NASB)

Now let's not stop here. Let's keep reading, Verses 12-13 say . . .

But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them. Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them." Numbers 20:12-13 (NASB)

So, what happened? First, God told Moses and Aaron that they would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land because they did not believe Yahweh so as to treat Him as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel." When God said this, He referred to His command in Leviticus 10:3 when He commanded Moses and Aaron to treat Him as holy. Numbers 27:14 repeats the same truth and describes Moses' behavior as rebellious.

So, what sin did Moses commit that caused him to lose his ministry? What did Moses do? First, he was told to take the rod and he did that. That was not a sin. Second, he was told to assemble the congregation and he did that too! Third, Moses did something that God did not tell him to do. In anger, he called the people rebels. So, some think that was the critical sin. For Psalm 106:32-33 tells us that Moses spoke rashly with his lips when he did this. That is, Moses became angry with these

complainers. I have wondered if due to their new complaining, Moses was afraid that God might make Israel wander even more years before they could enter the Promised Land. That must have fueled his anger.

Fourth, Moses asked a question, “Shall we bring forth water for you?” Some believe that when Moses asked this, he displayed pride and committed the critical sin. But we must remember that God told Moses that, “You shall thus bring forth water.” Moses just repeated what God had said.

Fifth, others believe the critical sin was that God had told him to speak to the rock, but he struck the rock twice. Now Moses had already hit a rock to obtain water once before in the Wilderness of Sin during the first year of their wanderings in the wilderness according to Exodus 16:1-7. But this event occurred in a different wilderness in the Wilderness of Zin. 1 Corinthians 10:4 tells us the rock was a type of Christ. So, some think that Moses in effect, figuratively, had crucified Christ twice. What is clear is that when Moses hit the rock, he clearly violated God’s command. This was incredibly bad news. But notice that God did not mention any of those sins. He simply said that Moses had failed to treat Him as holy before the people.

Yet, how did God respond? He caused water to flow out of the rock! Right!!? God blessed Moses’ ministry anyway! Right?! Moses was God’s minister in the desert! Right?! Most of us would have thought that if God allowed the water to flow, that would have revealed God was blessing Moses’ ministry in spite of whatever he had done wrong! He was God’s man! Right? Don’t signs of success reveal God’s approval and blessing?

But Numbers 20:12-13 reveal that the miracle of water flowing from a rock was not a sign of success or approval and of God’s blessing Moses. The flowing water from the rock was simply a sign of God’s common grace which means that God graciously met the physical needs of His people. God was not blessing Moses’ ministry when water flowed from the rock.

MOSES PLEADS WITH GOD. Nevertheless, Numbers 20:22-28 and 33:36-38 tell us that Aaron, the high priest, then died almost immediately in the fifth month of the fortieth year of Israel’s wandering.

Then about six months later in the last month before Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses told the Israelites that he had begged God to let him enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 3:25-28 records what happened. Moses said,

“Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.’ But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, ‘Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter. 27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.’” Deuteronomy 3:25-28 (NASB)

We are told that Moses said that he had begged God to let him cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. When he did, God said, “Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter.” At that moment, it is obvious that Moses’ begging would NOT change God’s decision. This reveals that Moses did not really understand the seriousness of what he had done! He had not believed how serious God was about treating Him as holy!!!! I think the same is true of us today. God calls us to be holy in 1 Peter 1:15-16. It says,

... “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” 1 Peter 1:16 (NASB)

We read it and keep moving. We feel better about our sin when we read that other Old Testament saints have sinned. We often consider sin to be a one-time event without any real consequence. I think that was true of Moses. He could not understand why his anger or disobedience would result in God not wanting him to complete his ministry and enter the Promised Land. Surely, his sin was not that serious. He had labored with these people all these years and now why should he not be allowed to take Israel across the Jordan River. He wanted to finish his ministry!

MOSES DOES NOT FULFILL HIS MINISTRY. Deuteronomy 32:48-51 adds,

The LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying, “Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel. Deuteronomy 32:48-51 (NASB)

Now notice HOW verse 51 is worded. Compare it to Numbers 20:12 and 27:14. Together these three passages reveal that there was only one thing that God consistently said to Moses in all three verses. It was this, Moses had failed to treat God as holy. That was Moses’ root sin. By not treating God as holy, he had sinned.

Now we have finally reached the critical point in our study. The question is, “What did God mean that Moses did not treat Him as holy?”

The answer is that even though Moses could NOT increase or decrease the holiness of God, since God is infinitely holy, Moses had not made God look or appear as holy. That was the root issue! His anger did not make God look holy. Hitting the rock did not make God look holy before all the people. So, He had also committed the sin of not hallowing God’s name! So, Moses would die an early death. His ministry in the desert was over, and his pleading in prayer did not change God’s decision!!!

Please turn to Deuteronomy 34:5-7. It describes Moses’ death. We are told . .

So, Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. 7 Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. Deuteronomy 34:5-7 (NASB)

When we are told that Moses had good vision even at the age of 120 years, and He had great energy, that reveals that

physically Moses did not need to die yet! He died a premature death. God’s minister in the desert would not see the fruit of his labors because he had failed to realize how utterly important it was to reflect the holiness of God to others.

We have already been told in Numbers 20:13 that after Moses sinned, God proved Himself to be holy among the people. How did He do that? First, He provided common grace to the people. Second, God ended the ministries of Aaron and Moses. By doing both things, God did not make Himself more holy because it is clear from Scripture that it is impossible to make God more holy because He is already infinitely holy. So, God did not make Himself more holy—He proved Himself to be holy. In Isaiah 6:3 the Seraphim praise God with,

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory.” Isaiah 6:1-3 (NASB)

When the seraphim cry out, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” I do not believe this is a reference to God being a trinity. For in both the Hebrew and Greek languages, when someone wanted to strongly emphasize a word, the word was repeated. So, the seraphim repeated the word “holy” three times to make the point that God is not just holy — He is the most holy of all. That is why John Oswalt wrote, “This is the strongest superlative in Hebrew. ¹ God is Holy, Holy, Holy. The message is that ONLY God is holy and He is supremely HOLY! Also, in 1 Samuel 2:2 we are told,

There is no one holy like the LORD,
Indeed, there is no one besides You,
1 Samuel 2:2 (NASB)

So, God proved Himself to be holy.

While Moses had done many great things and while he was the humblest man on earth (Numbers 12:3), God decided that Joshua would finish Moses’ ministry. The point we must not miss in all of this is that God did not need Moses to take Israel into the Promised Land. God’s purpose and plans would

¹ John Oswalt. The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Eerdmans Publishing. 1986. p. 181.

still be executed by Joshua. This sends us a serious and sobering warning that God ultimately does not need you or me to accomplish His purposes. For God will find someone to accomplish His purposes. So, we have learned two principles. First, God will prove He is holy. Second, it is a sin for believers to not reflect the holiness of God by our godly, obedient behavior before others.

Also, we need to notice that Moses did not lose his ministry because he committed adultery or another among the many sins that disqualify a person from ministry. Moses lost his ministry due to his anger and disobedience.

CONCLUSION. Now let's return to Matthew 6:9. When Jesus told us to pray, "Hallowed by Your name" He used the passive voice for the verb "hallowed." The passive voice reveals something happened to someone or something. So, Jesus is not encouraging us to ask the Father to make Himself holy nor to ask the Father to prove He was holy. Instead, Jesus is urging us to pray that someone make the Father holy. That is, you and I are to reflect the holiness of our Father in heaven to others. That is what we learned from Moses' sins. Since Jesus has given us a prayer request that means the only way we can make this request is that we want the Father to appear as holy to others. This applies to every believer! It applies to you and me! God wants you and me to want Him to appear as holy as we can as we live our lives.

I can remember as a youth sitting in the back of the sanctuary of the Church of the Open Door. I cannot tell you what J. Vernon McGee was preaching about, but I do remember that I began to cry and sob because I was struggling with the idea of having to obey God. While I was sobbing, an older woman in front of me turned around and asked if I was okay, and I said, "Yes!" I am sure it was obvious to the woman that I was not okay. I was a mess inside and outside. Then I finally realized that I had to make a decision. Did I want to please God by obeying Him? Then I told the Lord I wanted to obey Him. Now, many decades later, I still want to obey Him. I want to please Him, but I also want to reflect His holiness to others. I sure do not want God to prove Himself holy by punishing me. My heart's desire is that my life reflect the holiness of my Father who is in heaven.

D. A. Carson has said it correctly in his commentary "Jesus'

Sermon on the Mount,"

The highest goal is not that we be made holy; the highest goal is rather that God's name be hallowed.²

Psalms 23:3 says,

[He guides me in the paths of righteousness](#)

[For His name's sake. Psalm 23:3 \(NASB\)](#)

Notice that God is guiding us to be holy for His name's sake. God wants the desire of our hearts to be—that He is seen as holy. That is the essence of "Hallowed be Your name" in the Lord's Prayer.

James Montgomery Boice once spoke to a discipleship group on the attributes of God. He began by asking them to list God's qualities in order of importance. They put love first, followed by wisdom, power, mercy, omniscience, and truth. At the end of the list, they put holiness.

"That did surprise me," Boice later wrote, "because the Bible refers to God's holiness more than any other attribute."

The Bible doesn't generally refer to God as Loving, Loving, Loving! Or Wise, Wise, Wise! Or Omniscient, Omniscient, Omniscient! But over and over again we read the cry of the angels, Holy, Holy, Holy!³

² D. A. Carson. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Baker Books. 1987. P. 701.

³ James Montgomery Boice. "Holy, Holy, Holy." Moody Press. January 1985. p 14.