

The Lord's Prayer  
for His People



# The Lord's Prayer for His People

Robert Traill

Edited by Don Kistler



Soli Deo Gloria Publications  
*. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .*

*The Lord's Prayer for His People*

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## Publisher's Preface

Robert Traill (or Trail, 1642–1716) was a significant Christian pastor and theologian, notable for his courage under persecution and warm, evangelical sermons.<sup>1</sup> He was born in May 1642 in Elie in Fife, Scotland, where his father, also Robert Traill (1603–1678), had served as pastor since 1639.<sup>2</sup> By parenting and personal choice, Traill was committed to the Covenanter cause, a heartfelt allegiance to advancing Reformed experiential Christianity as the established religion of Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland. The Scottish Covenanters suffered greatly when the monarchy and the Episcopal Church were restored to Britain in 1660.

During Traill's childhood and early adulthood, he saw the travails of war and persecution. In the Civil War, his father

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1. On Traill's biography, see "An Account of the Life and Character of the Author," in *The Works of Robert Traill* (1810; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 1:iii–viii; Samuel Dunn, *Memoirs of the Seventy-Five Eminent Divines: Whose Discourses Form the Morning Exercises* (London: John Snow, 1844), 164–67; "Traill and His Writings," in Robert Traill, *Select Practical Writings* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1852), v–xii; D. B. Calhoun, "Traill (Trail), Robert," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron et al (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 827; A. S. Wayne Pearce, "Trail, Robert (1642–1716)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 55:211–12.

2. On the life of Traill's father, see Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, new ed. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1915), 1:38.

enlisted as chaplain with the Scottish army, attending the soldiers at the Battle of Marston Moor (July 2, 1644). He was transferred in 1648 to the Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh. Oliver Cromwell appointed him in 1654 to be a member of the board that certified qualified ministers for the Scottish Lowlands. During this period, the younger Traill studied at the University of Edinburgh, where he was a good scholar, graduating in the late 1650s. William Guthrie (1620–1665) of Fenwick, author of *The Christian's Great Interest*, became his mentor and close friend.<sup>3</sup>

When Charles II was restored to the British throne (1660), the elder Traill joined eleven other ministers in writing him a letter in which they welcomed him home but pressed him to keep the Solemn League and Covenant that he had vowed to uphold in the Treaty of Breda (1650). For this, the Protesters were arrested. Traill's father was imprisoned for ten months in Edinburgh Castle. Samuel Rutherford, himself no stranger to persecution, wrote to the imprisoned ministers, "Fear not ye. Ye are not, ye shall not be, alone: the Father is with you.... Fear Him who is sovereign."<sup>4</sup> Traill was nineteen when he bravely walked with one of the Protesters, James Guthrie of Stirling, to the scaffold where Guthrie was executed. Traill's father fell ill in prison and was granted some freedom, but then was charged with high treason on December 11, 1662, and banished.<sup>5</sup> He fled to the Netherlands, leaving behind his wife, Jean, and six children. One of his letters to his wife was

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3. Robert Traill, preface to *The Christians Great Interest*, by William Guthrie (Philadelphia: W. Young, 1789), 8–11. Traill's preface is dated 1705.

4. Samuel Rutherford, *Letters*, ed. Andrew A. Bonar (1891; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984), 693.

5. William Row, *The Life of Mr. Robert Blair*, ed. Thomas M'Crie (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1848), 364, 430; James King Hewison, *The Covenanters: A History of the Church in Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution* (Glasgow: John Smith and Son, 1980), 2:162–63.



published years later, revealing how he tenderly urged her to use the pain of their separation as an impetus to draw closer to Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> The authorities imprisoned Jean also in 1665 for corresponding with her exiled husband.<sup>7</sup> He later returned to Edinburgh and died on July 12, 1678, and was buried at the Greyfriars Church where he once had served.

In the 1660s, the younger Traill served briefly as chaplain to John Scot, Lord Scotstarvet. He also became connected with fellow Covenanter John Welsh of Irongray. Later, Traill and his family had to flee Edinburgh when a banned book was discovered in their home: *An Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professors of the Church of Scotland since August 1660* by John Brown of Wamphray. In 1666, Traill was implicated in the Pentland Rising, a Covenanter rebellion against the royal and episcopal forces sparked when royalist troops abused an old man in a Scottish village. Consequently, the Privy Council condemned Traill as a traitor and rebel. Anticipating arrest, he went to his father and other British divines who were in the Netherlands, taking refuge from Stuart absolutism. Traill continued his theological studies there, assisting Matthias Nethenus, professor of divinity at Utrecht, and helping to prepare Samuel Rutherford's

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6. *A Letter from the Rev. Mr Robert Traill, Late Minister at Edinburgh, To His Wife; as also One to His Children* (Edinburgh: by E. and J. Roberstons, for J. Traill, 1762). This letter is included in the younger Traill's *Works* (4:234–42), but it was written by his father. It refers to “Margaret, your youngest daughter” (4:236), and the youngest child of the elder Robert Traill and Jean was named Margaret (1648–1717); she married James Scott of Bristo. Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, 1:38. The letter to the children is from Rotterdam and is dated 1665 (*Works*, 4:238), but the younger Traill was still in Scotland at that time. Therefore, the letters are from the father, not the son. Cf. “Traill and His Writings,” in Traill, *Select Practical Writings*, vi.

7. Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1835), 1:423.

*Examination of Arminianism* for print. Nethenus described Traill as “a pious, prudent, learned, and industrious young man.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1669, Traill returned to Britain and settled in London. The following year he was installed in a Presbyterian congregation in Cranbrook, Kent. In 1677, Traill was arrested with John Welsh while visiting Edinburgh, this time for preaching in private homes and assisting in conventicles around the Scottish border. While imprisoned on Bass Rock, an island in the Firth of Forth, he met James Fraser of Brea and Alexander Peden.<sup>9</sup> He was released from prison a few months later and returned to his flock at Cranbrook. In 1682, Traill preached a powerful sermon at the Morning Exercises in London on 1 Timothy 4:16, addressing the question, “By what means may ministers best win souls?”<sup>10</sup> After the Glorious Revolution (1688), Traill served as copastor with Nathaniel Mather (1631–1697), son of Richard Mather and brother of Increase Mather of New England, in the Congregational church at Paved Alley, Lime Street.

In 1692 he published *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine of Justification*. In this short book, originally written to his oldest brother, William, minister of Borthwick, Midlothian, Traill asserted the classic Reformed view of justification with its spiritual advantages and defended it against the charge of antinomianism.

His dependence upon Christ is evident from his confession:

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8. Quoted in “Account of the Life,” in *Works*, 1:v. The text says “doctus, pius, prudens et industrius juvenis vir. D. Robertus Traillus.” Samuel Rutherford, *Examen Arminianismi*, ed. Matthia Netheno (Utrecht: Antonii Smytegelt, 1668), sig. \*\*\*3r.

9. “Traill and His Writings,” in Traill, *Select Practical Writings*, viii.

10. Robert Traill, “By what means may Ministers best win souls?,” in *A Continuation of Morning-Exercise Questions and Cases of Conscience...in October, 1682*, ed. Samuel Annesley (London: by J. A. for John Dunton, 1683), 195–216. See Traill, *Works*, 1:235–51.

I have no name to come to God but in Christ. My own name is abominable to myself.... No other name is given under heaven, but that of Jesus Christ, in which a sinner may safely approach unto God. Since the Father is well pleased with this name, and the Son commands me to ask in it, and the Holy Ghost hath brought this name to me, and made it as ointment poured forth (Song 1:3), and since its savor hath reached my soul, I will try to lift it up as incense to perfume the altar enthroned above; since all that ever come in this name are made welcome, I will come also, having no plea but Christ's name, no covering but his borrowed and gifted robe of righteousness. I need nothing, I will ask nothing, but what his blood hath bought (and all that I will ask); I will expect answers of peace and acceptance only in that blessed Beloved—beloved of the Father, both as His Son and our Savior, and beloved of all that ever saw but a little of his grace and glory.<sup>11</sup>

The book was occasioned by the controversy that broke out among dissenting ministers after the writings of Tobias Crisp were published. Traill opposed antinomianism on one side and Arminianism and the neonomianism of Daniel Williams and Richard Baxter on the other. "All my design in publishing this is, plainly and briefly, to give some information to ordinary plain people who lack either time or judgment to peruse large and learned tractates about this point of justification, wherein every one is equally concerned," Traill wrote.<sup>12</sup>

In 1696, Traill published *Thirteen Sermons on the Throne of Grace* on Hebrews 4:16. After Mather's death in 1697, Traill left the church and pastored another congregation in London.

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11. Quoted in "Account of the Life," in *Works*, 1:vi.

12. Robert Traill, *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine of Justification*, in *Works*, 1:288.

In 1705, he published *Sixteen Sermons on the Prayer of Our Saviour* on John 17:24. Traill died in 1716 at age seventy-four. He never married.<sup>13</sup>

Traill's exposition of John 17:24, which is presented in this volume, is a masterpiece of Puritan experiential doctrine. The text reads, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Traill analyzes it with the following exegetical outline, with his main doctrinal topic noted for each point:

- I. The Manner of Our Lord's Asking: "I will"  
—the doctrine of the intercession of Christ
- II. The Matter of Christ's Prayer
  - A. The Party He Prays For: "they whom thou hast given me"  
—the doctrine of election in Christ
  - B. The Blessing He Prays for Them: "that they may be with me where I am"  
—the doctrine of heaven with Christ
  - C. The End Why He Prays This for Them: "that they may behold my glory"  
—the doctrine of the glory of Christ (over half the book)
  - D. The Argument that He Prays: "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world"  
—the Father's eternal love for Christ

Each point contains many applications for life, and Traill addresses both believers and unbelievers in his exposition. His practical focus throughout the book is summed up in his statement in the original preface:

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13. On the letters to wife and children attributed to him in his *Works*, see note 6 above.

Three things are simply necessary unto any man's having of true religion and godliness: sound principles of divine truth known, the savor of that knowledge in the heart, and the power of that savor in a man's worship and walk. There are no sound principles of saving truth, but in and from God's written word. There is no right savor of those principles, but in and by "faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13; cf. 3:15). It is by this savor of the knowledge of Christ, as it is called (2 Cor. 2:14), that the power of godliness is impressed on the heart, and expressed in the life of a believer.

If the principles of truth be not from God's word, there can be no true religion. If the truth professed be consonant to God's word, and faith and love be wanting, it may be a man's notion and opinion, but it is not the man's religion. And if the power of known truth be not in his walk and conversation, neither should he himself, nor ought any other think, that such a man hath any religion at all.<sup>14</sup>

This was the last work published by Traill in his lifetime, and it amply testifies to his Christ-centered, Reformed, experiential preaching.

After his death, Traill's writings continued to be published and were well received. His twenty-one sermons on Hebrews 10:20–24, originally preached in 1694, were published posthumously as *A Steadfast Adherence to the Profession of Our Faith* (1718). Traill's writings were highly valued by the defenders of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, such as Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, in the controversy that erupted in Scotland in the 1720s.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Robert Traill, preface to *Sixteen Sermons on the Lord's Prayer*, in *Works*, 2:iii. The paragraph break is added.

15. John Brown, ed., *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated*, by the Reverend Messrs. James Hog, Thomas Boston, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and Others; Occasioned by the Republication of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*

His published *Works* were printed in two volumes (Edinburgh, 1754), and then in three volumes (Glasgow, 1775). Later, other sermon manuscripts by Traill would come into print: *Eleven Sermons* on 1 Peter 1:1–4 (1778) and *Six Sermons* on Galatians 2:21 (1779). These were incorporated into a new, four-volume edition of his *Works* (Glasgow, 1795–1796). Another edition of the *Works* followed (Edinburgh, 1810), which is the basis of the 1975 reprint of *The Works of Robert Traill* by the Banner of Truth Trust, consisting of four volumes bound as two.

A volume of his *Select Practical Writings* was also published (Edinburgh, 1852), which does not contain the full selection of previously published writings, but does supplement them with ten formerly unpublished sermons on Hebrews 12:29, Isaiah 63:16, Matthew 7:13–14, Ephesians 3:8, Philippians 2:12–13, 1 Corinthians 2:10, and Hebrews 6:4–6. One wonders how many more manuscripts of Traill's valuable sermons remain hidden in libraries and personal family collections in Scotland.

God continues to use Traill's faithful witness centuries after his voice resounded on the earth. In the late nineteenth century, J. C. Ryle quoted over a dozen times from Traill's writings in his classic *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (1877/1879), using Traill's clear distinctions between justification and sanctification and insights into assurance to defend the church against the Holiness Movement led by Pearsall and Hannah Smith. However, justification by faith alone is a doctrine assaulted in every age. Traill's book on justification has also been reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust as one of their Puritan Paperbacks,<sup>16</sup> and it remains relevant and helpful today.

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(Canonsburgh: Andrew Munro, 1827), 36; Donald Fraser, *The Life and Diary of the Reverend Ebenezer Erskine* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1831), 140.

16. Robert Traill, *Justification Vindicated*, Puritan Paperback series (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002).

Traill was a great contributor to the Puritan age. His name is linked to the best in Scottish, Dutch, and English Puritan traditions. Not only Presbyterians, but Christians of various denominations “have recognized the vigour of his intellect, the conclusiveness of his reasoning, the clearness of his ideas, . . . the zeal, the sincerity, and fervent piety with which his writings are pervaded.”<sup>17</sup> Howie said of him, “The simplicity and evangelical strain of the works of Mr. Traill have been savoury to many, and will ever be so, while religion and Scripture doctrine are in request.”<sup>18</sup>

We wish to thank Don Kistler for his editorial labors on this book, making available yet another Puritan classic. Thanks also to Ryan Hurd for his excellent copy editing skills, as well as to the effective typesetting/proofreading team we have in Linda and Gary den Hollander. May God use this rich, broad-sweeping exposition of the glorious text of John 17:24 to nourish many as much as proofreading this work has nourished us.

—Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley

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17. “Traill and His Writings,” in Robert Traill, *Select Practical Writings*, x.

18. John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, ed. W. H. Carlaw (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995), 625.





## CHAPTER 1

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### *The Introduction*

*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

—JOHN 17:24

You have heard many a good text taken out of the Word of God. But though all are good, there is none better than this one. Love the text, and love, above all, the blessed first speaker of it—and you will be more fit to profit by what you hear spoken in His name from it.

The best of all sermons, found in chapters 14, 15, and 16, concludes with the best of all prayers in chapter 17. In this prayer, properly called the Lord's Prayer (for that one in Matthew 6 is the pattern given for our praying rather than the Lord's Prayer), there are but few petitions, but they are all great ones. He prays, first, for Himself and His own glory (vv. 1–5) and then for His people to the end of this chapter. Verse 24 contains His last petition for them. And, passing the compellation "Father," used five times in this prayer, three times singly, as in verses 1, 5, and 24, twice with an addition, "Holy Father" (v. 11) and "Righteous Father" (v. 25), I take up two things in this petition.

First, the manner of our Lord's asking: "I will," a singular way of praying.

Second, the matter of Christ's prayer. And in it are four things:

1. The party He prays for: they whom "thou hast given me." Only Jesus Christ could pray thus for the elect as elect.

2. The blessing He prays for regarding them: that they may "be with me where I am." Where was Christ when He said this? He was going to the garden, to His agony, to be taken that night to be crucified [the] next morning and laid in His grave the next evening. But here our Lord is praying as one in heaven. See verses 11 and 12: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.... While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." And He prays to have His people with Him in heaven. He loved them so well that He came to the world where they were. He loved them so well that He endured what they deserved. And here He expresses His love in desiring that they may "be with me where I am." Christ and His people must be together.

3. In the matter of this prayer of Christ, we have the end why Christ prays for this blessing on them: "that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." Why would Christ have His people with Him where He is? That they may behold His glory. Are they to receive no glory of their own? Yes, a great deal, surely; yea, they have gotten some already. Verse 22: "The glory which thou gavest me [to give] I have given them." And they are to receive a great deal more in heaven, but it stands in and is advanced by their beholding Christ's glory.

Had they not beheld Christ's glory before? John 1:14: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Second Corinthians 3:18: "We all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord." Isaiah saw His glory and spoke of Him (Isa. 6; John 12:41). Why then does our

Lord speak of the necessity of His people's being with Him where He is so that they might behold His glory, since He can manifest His glory, and they, by grace, can behold it even when they are where they are and not yet where He is? The reason is this: because believers now, though by faith they can see something of Christ's glory, yet they do or can see but very little. The light is small, and their eyes are weak. But in that day that our Lord prays for, the discoveries of His glory will be greater, and the eyes of the glorified will be stronger than we can now conceive.

In the matter of this prayer, we have the argument on which our Lord prays for this blessing to His people: "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." You know that this phrase "before the foundation of the world" is a usual Scripture phrase for "eternity," for the foundation of the world and time began together. Creatures and time began together. Time is properly the measure of the duration of a creature, but God inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15). Creatures dwell or sojourn in time. So that this argument of our Lord's is "for thou lovedst me from eternity." And it has a mighty force in it. If our Lord had said, "I pray that they may be with Me where I am, for Thou lovedst them before the foundation of the world," He would have spoken what He had often told them, for they were given to Christ in love. But the argument is stronger as Christ expresses it here: "For Thou lovedst Me. I love them and would have them where I am. They love Me and would be with Me where I am. Thou lovest them and wilt have them where I am." But here is one argument more: "for thou lovedst me." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as entrusted with the office of a savior and charged with the chosen, was and is the object of the Father's eternal delight and love. And on this love the salvation of all the elect stands more firm than the pillars of heaven or earth.

So much for the words of this verse. And from this little glance I have given you of them, you may plainly perceive that here is a rich and deep mine, better than of gold that perishes. May the Lord help us to dig and find treasure and to be enriched by it.

The first thing in the text is the manner of Christ's praying here: "I will." It is a singular manner. About it, I would premise three things:

First, this is a way and manner of praying that we never read the like of used by any saint in the Word. Some of them have been very familiar with God, and the Lord has encouraged them much by His condescension to them. Yet nothing of this "I will" is to be heard or read of in their prayers. "I will" is too high for a supplicant at God's footstool. Abraham was a great intimate with God, the first believer honored with the noble name of "the friend of God." Yet this great friend who, when pleading for Sodom (Gen. 18), with what depths of humility is his confidence mixed! Again, when pleading for Ishmael in Genesis 17:18, he said, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" [This is] nothing like this "I will."

Abraham's grandson Jacob came a little nearer to this in Genesis 32:26: "Let me go," the angel says, "for the day breaks." Jacob answered, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." "Give me Thy blessing and go when Thou wilt." When he had gotten the blessing, he also got a halting thigh and a humbled heart while he lived, as he hints in Genesis 32:30: "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Not a word or thought of this: "I have seen God face to face. I have wrestled with Him hand to hand, and I have prevailed." No, he rather wonders that he got out of God's hands alive.

Righteous Jacobs, true Israels, in and on their greatest prevailings with God and blessings from Him, are lowly, humble believers, yea, humbled by God's advancing them. Moses, that

great wrestler with God for Israel, though he expressed a holy resolve, yet nothing appears like this “I will.” “Let me alone,” said the Lord, “that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them” (Ex. 32:10). It is strange that one man should, as it were, hold the Lord’s hands, that one man’s faith should stop the execution of a just sentence against a sinful people. Surely, you may conclude that the Lord is easy to be entreated. Again, in Exodus 33:15, Moses said, “If thy presence go not with me [or us], carry us not up hence”—that is, “It is as good for us to die here as to go anywhere without Thy presence.” The wilderness, though waste and howling, and Canaan, though the glory of all lands, are alike to Moses without God’s presence.

Again, in Numbers 14:12, Moses had a great offer from the Lord: “I will destroy this people and make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they.” Moses, in his zeal for God’s glory, refused this offer and pleaded still and prevailed. Yet never is “I will” in all his importunity. No believer ever does or ought to speak so to God. They should all ask according to His will and forget and deny their own will. Yet Christ said, “I will,” and well might He say so.

This “I will” is not in a promise to us, but in a prayer to His Father. When the Lord promises to do or give good to His people, it is very becoming to use this style: “I will do” or “give” or “be” so and so to My people. And it is this “I will” in a promise that faith fixes on, as Jacob did. “Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good” (Gen. 32:12). But our Lord is here praying, though I own that there is a great promise implied in it, as we will hear.

There is nothing like this in all the accounts we have of Christ’s prayers at other times and on other occasions. We find that our blessed Savior was much given to prayer alone. Bless Him for it, and love secret prayer the better that He

used it Himself and thereby hallowed it to our use. How our Lord spent those nights in the mountain in prayer, and what He prayed for, and how, we cannot tell—except by Hebrews 5:7: There are “prayers and supplications” offered up “with strong crying and tears.” Believers, you, sometimes, when your hearts are full, want to be far from all company so that you may pour out your complaint to the Lord. Blessed Jesus did so in the days of His flesh, filled the silent night with His crying, and watered the cold earth with His tears, more precious than “the dew of Hermon” or any moisture (next to His blood) that ever fell on God’s earth since the creation. Never were such sinless and precious tears in God’s bottle (Ps. 56:8). Let yours drop, believers, and mix them in the same bottle with His. And on this account sow them in hope, and you will reap in joy (Ps. 126:5).

But for Christ’s prayers recorded in the gospel, we find our Lord prayed very humbly, though confidently. When He prays in His agony, there is not a word of “I will,” but, “Abba, let this cup pass from Me, if Thou wilt; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.” Christians, behold the amazing difference between Christ’s way of praying against His own hell (if I may so call it) and His praying for our heaven. When praying for Himself it is, “Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from Me.” And no wonder, for every drop in that cup was wrath and curse and death. One drop of it is everlasting poison to all who taste it but to Jesus, the prince of life. This cup He drank cheerfully: “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11).

But when Christ is praying for His people’s heaven, it is, “Father, I will that they may be with Me where I am.” Again, when our Lord is dying on the cross, He prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And again, just at dying: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke

23:34, 46). All are humble supplications. None of them are so high and lofty (but yet it well became Him) as this “I will.” I own that Christ in one instance (on the cross) put forth His divine power and acted like a king and God (Luke 23:42–43). One of the malefactors who was crucified with Him found the happiest death man ever had—next to dying *for* Christ, was to die *with* the Savior, and to die receiving Christ’s grace and Christ’s pass to heaven. Whatever Thomas meant in his words in John 11:16, “Let us go, that we may die with him,” this happy malefactor had the best of it fulfilled on him. He died with Christ and got eternal life on the same day. Surely that word was eminently fulfilled in this man from Ecclesiastes 7:1: “Better is the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” This man prayed marvelously, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Our Lord answered more marvelously, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” It is as if Christ had said, “Can your faith take Me up as a king and the disposer of heaven, notwithstanding this thick and dark veil that is now on Me? I will act as a God and savior to you. Today you will be with Me in paradise.” These words have no small aspect on this text: “I will that they be with me where I am.”

Now let us see what may be in these two words in Christ’s prayer of “I will.” No saint ever prayed so. Christ Himself in this prayer only here uses this one word in the original. There must be some singular things that made our Lord use this word in prayer, and it is those into which I would look.

We may lawfully conceive that herein there is a breaking out of His divine glory as the Son of God, equal with the Father, as in Philippians 2:6–10, where the apostle marks three things about Christ, none of which must be forgotten by Christians: the divine dignity of His person (v. 6); the depth of His low and humbled state (vv. 7–8); and the height of His exalted

state (vv. 9–11). So does the apostle to the Hebrews (1:3). Now, though Christ's humbled and exalted states had and have their several distinct appearances, yet as His divine dignity was still the same in both states, in His lowest and at His highest, so there were now and then some beamings of His glory even in His lowest state (John 2:11) and in His triumphant entry to Jerusalem, even when He was going to be crucified. So we may think that this singular word "I will" is used by Christ to display His divine glory, for it is a word that no mere man may use.

Our Lord has promised it to His disciples in John 14:2–3 and therefore prays thus for it. And we must think that the doctrines delivered by Christ in His last sermon of consolation and this last prayer of His, though in the first place designed for His apostles, are yet the common portion of all believers on Jesus Christ. Now Christ had promised in John 14:2–3 that where He was, there His people would be also. If a poor believer has at any time a firm hold on a promise of God, how he will cleave to it, plead on it, and urge it, as in 2 Samuel 7:27–29. But who can conceive what confidence of faith Jesus Christ the Son of God had and used in pleading with His Father for the fulfilling of all His own promises to His people? Besides, all Christ's promises to His people were made by Him in His Father's name. No wonder then that our Lord says, "I will."

Christ here gives us a copy and pattern of His intercession in heaven that is so much spoken of. Christ here speaks as within the veil (vv. 4, 11–12), as if He had done all His work and were no more in the world. He had done so much, but had but a little more to do. And that also was to be speedily dispatched. Christ's intercession in heaven is a kind and powerful remembrance of His people and of all their concerns, managed with state and majesty—not as a supplicant at the footstool, but as a crowned prince on the throne at the right hand of the Father.



So is it expressed in Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1, 12–13; and 12:2. This may be one reason of this great “I will.”

Here our Lord is making His will. And therefore “I will” is fitly put in. Christ is making His last will and testament and praying it over to His Father, which He sealed the next day with His blood. And here He tells what He wills to His people, even “that they may be with me where I am.” And nothing greater or better could be willed for them. Blessed for evermore are they who have this willed and bequeathed to them. And you have a word like this in Luke 22:29: “I appoint unto you a kingdom,” that is, “I bequeath it, dispose it, and make it over to you,” as the word may be rendered.

Our Lord had the price of this glory in His hand, ready now to lay down. And therefore He demands the purchase, for Christ was taken this night and died the next day. The price of the redeemed and of their salvation, a price agreed on in the everlasting covenant, a price of infinite value in itself, a price the Father’s wisdom and justice demanded, a price the Son promised to lay down in the fullness of time, a price on the payment whereof such great things were promised to Christ and His seed—this price is now in Christ’s hand, ready to be laid down. No wonder then if Christ demands the purchase in this high word “I will.” Believers, it passes all your thoughts. It passes the highest flights of your faith to conceive that high assurance and confidence which our Lord Jesus had of the acceptance and success of the sacrifice of Himself that He was now offering to His Father. Hence comes this great “I will.”

This “I will” is but an echo to the known will of His Father. It does not become us to say in our prayers, “I will,” because we do not perfectly know God’s will. And when our desires clash with His will, we dash against a rock. But Christ knew perfectly that the thing He was praying for was the will of His Father (John 6:38–40). When a believer has a sure knowledge of God’s

will, his faith may plead boldly on it. We read of one bold word of blessed Luther. Hearing of the dangerous sickness of an eminent minister of the gospel, he prayed for him, prevailed with the Lord for his life, and wrote to him that he was assured that the Lord would restore him and preserve him to outlive Luther, which came to pass. In the close of his letter he wrote, "Let my will be done; mine, Lord, because it is Thine."

This "I will" in Christ's prayer for His people shows how much His heart was set on the eternal happiness of His people. He prays for it with all His heart. On that sweet theme, I would offer a few things:

Let us consider how Christ's love and will was the necessary price of their salvation. However dear it was to Him, whatever it cost Him, His love was in laying it down: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened [or pained] till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50). And it was a baptism in His own blood. And Luke 22:15: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." And it was His last meal. Love for His Father and love for His sheep made our Lord long greatly to pay the price of redemption.

There are several thoughts in men's hearts about Christ dying. Some think of Christ's death as being brought about by the wicked hands of sinners. This is a poor thought, if there is no more. This thought is natural to any who read the history of His death. Carnal men may hate Judas who betrayed Him, Pilate who condemned Him, the priests who cried, "Crucify Him," and the people who did it. If this is all, I may say the devils have a higher thought of Christ's death and that which comes nearer to the truth than this sorry one.

Some go further and think of Christ's death as being a fulfilling of the purpose and word of God concerning Him. This Christ teaches us in Luke 24:26, 44, 46, and the apostles frequently in their preaching of Christ.

There is a higher thought of Christ's death, namely, that Christ died by the stroke of God's law and justice for His people. Justice roused itself against our Lord: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd" (Zech. 13:7). This sword was drawn and furbished and entered into His soul: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5). Better were it that a man had never heard of Christ and His death than to hear and not to know that His death was for his sins. This is the first doctrine that Paul taught. And he is an ignorant and proud preacher who does not follow this pattern: "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3).

The best thought of Christ's death is that He died out of love for His people. Love made Him come in the way of justice. Justice and the law said, as it were, "Either Thou or they must die. They have sinned. The law must be fulfilled; justice must be satisfied." But blessed Jesus answered, "I love them too well to let them die. I will die for them so that they may live." Christ's death is still laid on His love (John 10:11; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:25–26). "He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5)—that is, He loved us so that He shed His own blood for our sins. And then in the same love He washed us from our sins, in and by that blood which He shed in love. Oh, such love! Such blood! Such washing! Here is salvation, and here only. It is a damning dream to expect it anywhere else.

Consider that, as Christ's love was much set on paying the price of redemption, so His love and will were as much set on the persons of the redeemed. He laid down the price in love for the purchase. How can it enter into a man's thoughts that the Son of God should lay down so great a price and not know

what He was to take up for it? That He should die and not know for whom, nor who should be the better for it? His dying was in love. And did He not know whom He loved? His love is still spoken of as distinguishing and particular: for His body, His people, His sheep whom He knew (John 10).

The ways and means of bringing His redeemed to glory were also much in Christ's love and will. John 17:6, 26: "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it.... that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." And John 10:16: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold"—that is, they are not of the Jews, but of the elect Gentiles—"them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." Every means of grace, every blessing of the means, every drop of grace you receive, as Christ is the giver, so His love and will are in bestowing them on you. All things that accompany salvation are given with the love and will of Christ.

Christ's will is on the end itself, eternal glory. It is first in His design, though it is last in our enjoyment, as we see in this text. He will have His people with Him where He is.

*Application:* There is one thing I would exhort you to from this doctrine: Christ's love and will are fixed on the eternal glory of His people. Therefore, let believers learn to own their eternal salvation as springing from the will of Christ as well as from the blood of Christ. There was a saving will in Christ in shedding His saving blood—"by the which will we are sanctified," that is, justified and saved, in the style of that epistle, especially "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). What that will is has been declared in the previous verses to be the Father's will in commanding the true sacrifice and the Son's will in offering this commanded

sacrifice. By this will, we are saved. This will, thus fixed, is thus accomplished in Christ's death.

There are three great advantages which we will reap by this looking on heaven, the prize of our calling, as willed by Jesus Christ:

First, it will stir you up to praise and glorify Him. He who took on Himself the burden of our souls and the care of our salvation would surely be the burden of all our songs for salvation and for the hope of it. So the apostle sings in Revelation 1:5 hearty praise to Jesus Christ, for salvation can never be given unless men know that all their salvation is owing to Him alone, to His will and to His blood. If a man ascribes any bit of His salvation to anything or person besides Christ, that thing or person will bear away or rob something of the glory of salvation. But since all salvation is from Christ, all the glory of it should be given to Him.

Second, this will make your faith in Christ strong. What is strong faith? Christians usually think that strong faith has peace, joy, and comfort in it. But these are only the effects of it, and separable also, as in Psalm 22:1. Never was faith nearly so strong in any saint as it was in the man Christ on the cross. And yet no joy or comfort was tasted by Him then. But as to faith in believers, strong faith is when a believer gets far into the love and will of Jesus Christ. Now this doctrine opens up Christ's love and will about our salvation. Let us then enter into it.

Faith makes several approaches to Christ for and about salvation:

It seeks and finds and sees atoning, reconciling blood flowing from Christ's love: "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). "In whom we have redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7).

Faith sees life springing and growing out of Christ's grave. Alas! Many are busy about Moses' grave and have no business

with Christ's grave. A believer sees eternal life springing from Christ's death and grave.

Faith goes further, and through this blood of atonement and this life-giving death, it enters into Christ's love and will that were in His redeeming. As there was life to us in His death, so there was love to us in His dying for us (Rev. 1:5). But can faith go any further? Yes, only one step more, and that is to the highest fountain of all, even God's eternal purpose that He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:11). So that faith begins at Christ's death, rises with Him in His resurrection, sees the virtue and power of all in Christ's love, and then rises to the love of the Father who sent Him, to that purpose of grace from which the Savior and all salvation proceeds. Can faith go any further? No. Here faith is at a standstill. The believer is saved and yet sinks and is overwhelmed in this depth; and, like one swallowed up, he cries out, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). When faith gets a view of the unsearchable riches of God's grace in, by, and through Jesus Christ, then the believer longs to be in heaven to behold the fountainhead of all grace and glory. Faith longs to cease to be faith. This is a strange and strong act of faith, a strange desire in a believer. "Oh, when will I cease to be a believer and become a seer! Then will the glass be done away, and the full-eyed vision of glory succeed! When will both faith and hope cease, and love fill their room?" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:10–12).

Third, seeing Christ's heart and will about your salvation will enable you to pray and labor rightly for glory. What is it to do it rightly? It is to labor with courage and to labor with humility. And a Christian's work prospers when those are united, as they always should be. How boldly may a believer say, "I would be in heaven since Christ wills it!" And how humbly

should he say, "I would be there," since his own will about it signifies nothing, and Christ's will is all!

*Objection:* How will I know that I am in Christ's will for salvation? If I knew it, then I would give thanks. I would believe firmly and would labor hard to obtain the possession of this glory.

*Answer:* To this objection I offer three things:

Consider how they behaved themselves who with their own ears heard those very words from Christ's own mouth. It is a vain thought that readily rises in all our hearts that—if we had been present and had heard Christ praying thus for us in a special, particular way that we might be with Him where He is—then we would believe our salvation even if we were in the saddest distress. But now consider what great encouragement to faith Christ gave them. He told them, "I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2–3). What more could they desire than to have Christ telling them to their faces, "You and I must indeed part for a little while; but you and I will quickly meet again, never to part any more"? They also heard with their own ears Christ praying His promise to them to His Father, "I will that they be with me where I am." Could such believers, under all those great and singular advantages, ever stagger again? Yes. Almost as soon as this encouraging sermon and prayer ended, their faith was almost at an end too. "Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone" (John 16:31–32).

I say this to check the vanity of this thought in Christians that if they only had sufficient ground of the assurance of Christ's love and of eternal glory, they would believe in every difficulty and trial. Yet you see how they behaved who had such

grounds of faith from Christ's own lips, while He was bodily present with them, which you cannot expect or desire. And I hope none of you will imagine that if you had been in those good men's places and had received their helps, you would have behaved better than they did. Grounds of faith, if ever so great, yet if not attended with the influence of the Spirit of faith, will never keep faith in life and vigor.

What reason have you to doubt your interest in this prayer of Christ? You may say, "I am so vile and unworthy that I cannot believe that Christ willed me to be with Him." If this is all, it is nothing, yea, worse than nothing.

Has not Christ willed eternal glory to many as bad as ever you were? Did He ever will heaven based on some worthiness in the persons who are to receive it? Is it not always willed to the praise of His own grace and love in the giver, and never as a recompense to the worth and liveliness of the receiver?

Christ will mend you before He brings you to heaven. And a great work it is to make you fit for it (Col. 1:12), a work that must be done, and that He only can do, and He can easily do.

Right preparation for glory flows from the faith of Christ's good will to give it. It is a weak and ignorant (but common) thought of Christians that they ought not to look for heaven nor trust Christ for eternal glory till they are well advanced in holiness and fitness for it. But as the first sanctification of our natures flows from our faith and trust in Christ for acceptance, so our further sanctification and fitness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of faith on Him. The hope of glory is purifying (1 John 3:3).

Every believer has the witness in himself that he has an interest in Christ's heart and will in this prayer: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). The apostle is speaking of the many witnesses that are given to Jesus Christ as the Savior. There are three in



heaven (v. 7) and three on earth (v. 8). All are divine witnesses and sufficient grounds of faith in Jesus Christ (v. 9). Now, says the apostle in verse 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God," who trusts his soul and its salvation to this so well-attested Savior, "hath the witness," or testimony, "in himself."

There are witnesses in heaven, witnesses on earth, and a testimony in the heart of a believer in Christ. Whoever believes on Christ, that faith is sufficient evidence (if he will require it to speak and will regard its testimony—and both of them require actings of faith) to persuade him that he has an interest in Christ's prayer here.

On this point I would glance at four things and then conclude:

Believers in Christ, what do you do when you believe? Oh, that all believers knew what they do when they believe! Do you not, in every distinct act of faith, entrust your guilty, perishing soul to the saving arm of Jesus Christ, on the warrant of all that grace, mercy, and power that belong to Christ in His office as a savior? And is not His willing eternal glory a great and glorious beam of that grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which you believe to be saved (Acts 15:11)?

How did you come by your faith? Is it not His gift? He is the author of it (Heb. 12:2). It is given on Christ's behalf (Phil. 1:29). Whenever you have an evidence in your heart (and it is your own fault if you do not have it daily) that you have true faith in Jesus Christ, even if it is only weak and cannot mount so high as it ought, raise it by this consideration: How did this spark of faith come to be kindled in my heart? Did it naturally grow in my heart? No. Time was when I was without it (Eph. 2:12) and loved to be without it. Did Satan plant it? No. I find him to be the great enemy of it, and I never felt his enmity till I began to trust Jesus Christ. And it is that in me which he mainly assaults. Did ministers and the means of grace plant

faith in me? No. I enjoyed them when no faith was wrought in me. And when it is wrought, all their power without Christ's grace and Spirit concurring cannot raise this faith to act and exercise. Therefore, surely, this faith came from Jesus Christ Himself. Was it not from the work, will, and love of Christ? How easy and natural the inference is! If faith in Christ is the work of His love, with what great warrant may I look by that faith for all the good that His love purposes, promises, and prays for to me!

Can you call Him to witness, with a good conscience, that your great desire and will is to be with Christ in heaven? If the Lord should try you with this question, "Name one thing that you would have above all," every believer has his answer ready. It is, "Lord, that I may be ever with Thee where Thou art," as David said of God's house on earth in Psalm 27:4. This I infer, if your love is set on being with Christ where He is, be assured that Christ's love is set on the same blessing for you—yea, your desire for it flows from His desire of it for you.

Are you willing, yea, pleased and delighted to hold your title to eternal glory by the will and testament of Jesus Christ? Are you willing to have and hold the crown by this tenure only, that it was bought by His blood and willed to you by His testament? Every believer would be in heaven because Christ is there and is pleased to get and keep his place there as willed to him by Jesus Christ. Heaven is a lovely name and a more lovely thing. But it is not at all known by many, and but little by the best. But yet believers look for it and expect it as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. They plead for it as such. At last, they receive it as grace and eternally wear the crown as a crown of grace, as well as a crown of glory. The glorified saint, as soon as he receives this crown, casts it at Christ's feet (Rev. 4:10), or sets it on Christ's head, as if he were ashamed to wear a crown where Christ, the only worthy one, is.

On Christ's head are many crowns (Rev. 19:12). His Father puts a crown on Him. God has "crowned him with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9). The church crowns Him (Song 3:11) with a crown of salvation. And every saved person puts on Christ's head the crown of the glory of their particular salvation.

To conclude, they who are not willing to give the glory of all salvation to Jesus Christ will never receive any salvation from Him. But for you who are willing to receive all from Him and are delighted to render the glory of all to Him, His heart is toward you. His best wishes are for your good, and He will give you what He has prepared for you, which is exceedingly above all that can be told to you.