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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME”
Matthew 6:9; Malachi (Selected Verses)

□ Matthew 6:9 ~ **“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”**

To “hallow” someone is to: *hold them in highest regard, venerate them, honor them in word and deed, treat them with reverence.* And in Scripture a name expresses a person’s essence. To hallow the Name is to hallow God himself. Hence, we could translate Matthew 6:9: {Jer} **“May your name be held holy”**; {GNB} **“May your holy name be honored”**; or, {CEV} **“help us to honor your name.”**

Remember, each phrase of the Lord’s Prayer reveals (in varying degrees) a crucial aspect of God’s essence, our relationship with God in Christ; and our vocation as Christ-Followers.

✪ As for God’s essence, “hallowed be your name” reveals that God is inherently holy.

● Isaiah 6 {6:1-3, 5} describes how the LORD God revealed himself to the prophet:

I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted... Above him were seraphs ... they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” ...

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips...”

The LORD is holy when we hallow his Name, and when we do not.

✪ As for our relationship with God in Christ, **“hallowed be your name”** reveals that we draw nearer to God when we hallow him.

● **“Come near to God,”** instructs James 4:8, **“and he will come near to you.”**

● Hebrews 4:16 adds that we are to do this **“with confidence,”** because God the Son graciously mediates our relationship with his Father.

● A word of caution: confidence is not the same thing as presumption. Approaching God as though He were our buddy or pal only alienates us from him. The higher we hallow God, the nearer we draw to him.

Therefore, James 4:10 says **“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”**

✪ As for our vocation as Christ Followers, **“hallowed be your name”** reveals that we are called to exalt God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in thought, word and deed.

● The LORD is **“enthroned on the praises of”** his people (Psalm 22:3). We cannot help build God’s kingdom without venerating him.

Hallowing our Father’s Name is a monumental calling. It involves all that we think, say and do.

To me, at least, anything as all-encompassing as this is abstract and a little unreal. How can we frame it in a way that is more concrete and down-to-earth? As I was wrestling with that question this week, I came across a reference to the Old Testament book of Malachi. Please turn there with me.

☹ In Malachi, God accuses his people of failing to hallow his Name.

■ The Almighty sets the tone in Malachi 1:6 [NLT] ~ **“I am your father and master, but where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have despised my name!”** Then He lists 5 ways in which Israel has defiled his Name.

We should note that Malachi was speaking to Hebrew people in Palestine in the mid-430s B.C. Even so, {Heb 4:12} **“The Word of God is alive and active,”** so while the original meaning never changes it, it has relevant application in every time and place. Reading Mt 6:9 in light of this prophecy can make it practical and achievable. Here goes!

☞ Israel dishonored God’s Name with substandard worship.

■ In Malachi 1:7-8 {NLT} the LORD confronts the priests ~ **“You have despised my name by offering defiled sacrifices on my altar....When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn’t that wrong? Isn’t it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased?”**

● Leviticus {22:20-25} and Deuteronomy {15:21} explicitly prohibit the offering of defective animals, and these priests knew it. They had no excuse.

■ In Malachi 1:14 the LORD confronts the laity: **“Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For... my name is to be feared among the nations.”**

● We don’t sacrifice animals. But the LORD has enabled us to {Jn 4:24} **“worship in the Spirit and in truth,”** and He expects us to **“continually offer [him] a**

sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:15-16).

☼ Our worship hallows God’s Name when: we are empowered by the Spirit, proclaim God’s truth, **“offer praise,”** and when there is a correlation between our worship and our outside actions. On the other hand, we defile God’s Name when our worship lacks those qualities.

☞ Israel dishonored God’s Name with theological ignorance.

■ Take a look at Malachi 2:5-6 {NLT}. Speaking of his covenant with the priesthood, the LORD says: **“They... stood in awe of my name. They passed on to the people all the truth they received from me.”** Jumping down to vv 7-8 {TNIV}: **“a priest ought to preserve knowledge ...But ...by your teaching have caused many to stumble.”**

● Maybe these priests did not know Scripture. Maybe their beliefs were inaccurate. Regardless, they did not {2 Tim 2:15} **“correctly [handle] the word of truth,”** and so they failed to hallow God’s Name.

● This has special relevance for pastors and teachers. Yet Jesus has made all his people {Rev 5:9} **“priests to serve our God.”** In Christ we are {1 Pet 2:5,9} **“being built into...a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.”** Every citizen of the kingdom is accountable to God in this.

⚙ Theological ignorance or sloppiness defiles God's Name. In contrast, our belief hallows God's Name when we correctly discern, faithfully learn, clearly teach and obediently apply his Word.

👉 Israel dishonored God's Name by violating sacred human covenants.

■ In Malachi 2:10, the prophet laments: **“Are we not all children of the same Father? Are we not all created by the same God? Then why are we faithless to each other, violating the covenant of our ancestors?”**

■ Moving on to vv 14-16 he rails against marital infidelity and casual divorce: **“the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is ...the wife of your marriage covenant,”** and so forth.

There is a causal link between integrity in human interactions and a quality relationship with God. Unfaithfulness to others alienates us from Holy God.

⚙ Broken human covenants defile God's Name. The good news is that our human covenants of friendship, familial love, and marriage hallow God's Name when we honor those relationships.

👉 Israel dishonored God's Name by committing economic, political and judicial injustice.

■ Malachi 3:5 ~ **“I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me,”** says the LORD Almighty.

The demands of covenant faithfulness have equal weight in corporate and public relationships as in individual, private ones. But Malachi's people behaved as though God would look the other way as they abused the poor, took advantage of the weak, and ran roughshod over the vulnerable.

How does this apply to us?

⚙ Injustice defiles God's Name. In contrast, our economic, political and judicial dealings hallow God's Name when we {Mic 6:8} **“act justly and...love mercy and...walk humbly with our God.”**

👉 Finally, Israel dishonored God's Name with selfish, self-centered religion.

■ In Malachi 3:14 we read: **“You have said, ‘What's the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the LORD Almighty that we are sorry for our sins?’**

Many in Israel served God mainly for the tangible benefits they expected to get in return. When He did not bless them good health, abundant crops, power and success, they thought the LORD had not kept his end of the bargain!

⚙ But we defile God's Holy Name when we approach relationship with him as a commercial transaction. Our religion hallows God's Name when we worship and serve him because He is worthy, regardless of the benefit or cost to us.

Authentic, excellent worship; correct understanding and obedience to God's Word; honoring human covenants; seeking justice and mercy, and practicing religion that is humble and God-centered – all these actions hallow God's great Name.

Of course, there is much more to it. This list is not exhaustive – it barely scratches the surface! But it is a good start.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

This is the Word of the Lord.