

“Hallowed Be Your Name”
Show the Holiness of Your Reputation
1) To me 2) Through me
(Part 2 of *Lord’s Prayer* Sermon Series)

Apparently more than 10 million people a day check out eBay, that online auction website where you can buy anything from a broken laser pointer (the first eBay item ever offered for sale) to a jet (the most costly item purchased on eBay). If you’re not among the 10 million shoppers on eBay, is it because you’re worried about getting ripped off? I mean how can you really be certain that you’re going to receive the item you paid for? When you buy something at a store you can handle the merchandise before purchasing it and immediately take it home with you after you’ve handed over your hard-earned cash. Veteran shoppers will tell you that before purchasing something off of eBay you’ll want to check out the seller’s feedback profile. If the merchant in question has ripped off others, there should be a record of it causing you to pause before you hit the “buy now” button.

Putting your faith in the God of the Bible is a little like purchasing something on eBay. You don’t get to “handle” eternal life before buying into it. We simply have God’s word that putting our faith in Jesus will one day lead to an eternal life of happiness. But what if we’re wrong? What if all this time you spent at church and all the money you gave for ministry was a waste because the Bible wasn’t true? God knows that we struggle with doubts like these. That’s why Jesus taught us to pray “Hallowed be your name.” What we are asking with the First Petition in the Lord’s Prayer is for God to show the holiness of his reputation *to* us so that lingering doubts of God’s trustworthiness will disappear. We’re also asking that he show the holiness of his reputation *through* us so that others too may glorify God’s saving name.

Isn’t it interesting that Jesus taught us to pray, “Hallowed be your *name*” and not “Hallowed be *you*, O God”? Perhaps the reason for this is that it’s really only through his name, that is, his reputation that we now can know God. God is invisible and lives in an unapproachable light explains the Apostle Paul (1 Timothy 6:16). So if everything we know about God now comes to us through his reputation, it’s no wonder God wants his reputation to be hallowed, that is to be held in high esteem.

A pizza parlour owner in Pennsylvania was once arrested for planting bags of mice in the pizza joints of his competitors. He figured if mice were seen running around those restaurants their reputation and therefore their business would suffer. That news item is worth a few chuckles but had the saboteur succeeded the affected pizza joint owners wouldn’t have been laughing. Nor is it a laughing matter when Satan sabotages God’s reputation as he did in the Garden of Eden when he caused Eve to question God’s goodness for telling her not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

What kind of doubts has Satan planted in you regarding God’s reputation? When you read about how God ordered the Israelites to slaughter every last man, woman, and child who lived in Canaan, do you wonder: “How can this be a God of love?” Or when you think about the people who never had the chance to hear about Jesus do you also question how God can really condemn them to hell on Judgment Day? Like a bag of mice shoved into the rafters of a restaurant, these doubts skitter through our hearts and unsettle our faith. The results can be disastrous. When Adam and Eve doubted God’s Word they traded paradise for a patch of thorns.

But Jesus knows how difficult, really how impossible it is for sinners to trust the ways of a holy and just God. Therefore he urges us to pray, “Hallowed be your name.” To paraphrase, we’re asking: “Show us the holiness of your reputation, Lord. Overcome the doubts Satan plants in our hearts so that we continue to hold your reputation as the Savior-God in high esteem and one day trade this patch of thorns for paradise.” God has already answered that prayer. The Apostle Peter assures us, “*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”...we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place*” (2 Peter 1:16,

17, 19a). Peter wants us to know that the message we read in the Bible is truly from God and can be trusted. It's not something man made up.

But it isn't just sly-ol' Satan who can damage God's reputation. I can be guilty of that if I'm careless in my sermon and Bible class preparation. So when you pray the First Petition, I want you to ask God to send me, as well as our Sunday School teachers a special measure of the Holy Spirit so that when we stand before you and tell you about the God of the Bible we don't misrepresent him in any way and therefore damage your faith.

But the First Petition isn't just for preachers; it's a prayer for all believers. For when we petition, "Hallowed be your name," we're also asking God to show the holiness of his reputation *through* us. As a Christian you are salt and light to a sin rotten and darkened world. Yet when you spit back an insult to the one who has just hurt your feelings, you're playing by the world's rules, not God's. When you're more concerned with doing well than doing good, you show that you're no different than the CEO who could care less about how his product affects consumers as long as it keeps bringing in the money to fund his bonus. When you get excited by the prospect of being left home alone so you can watch that crass TV program without anyone interfering, you show that you think hallowing God's name is a burden to be shrugged off at the first opportunity.

As we consider the words, "Hallowed be your name," we must confess: "God, I have not kept your name holy in my life. My words and my actions have dragged your name through the mud. I don't deserve to be called your child but should be treated as your enemy. Forgive me."

Just as God promises to listen to you when you pray the Lord's Prayer in faith, he also promises to listen to that prayer of repentance. He forgives you for the sake of his Son Jesus who became your substitute. Over a century ago it wasn't uncommon for rich people to pay others to take their place in the army for them. This was especially prevalent in the South during the Civil War. Instead of dodging bullets and sleeping on the hard ground in wind and rain, a rich plantation owner could pay a poor farmer to do that for him. You can understand why a poor farmer would willingly trade his fields for the front lines, don't you? Sure, there was a real risk of dying but since the farmer would probably have to fight anyway, why not get paid handsomely to do it? Can you imagine the reverse happening - the rich plantation owner going to the front lines to fight and die in place of the poor farmer? There were such men so committed to the Southern cause that they willingly left their plantations to fight. Many of them died. But I doubt if a single one of those men made arrangements for the poor neighbor farmer to take over his plantation in the event of his death. But isn't that what Jesus did when he willingly took our place in the crosshairs of Calvary? He fought our battle and died our death when he took the full impact of God's wrath over our sins. And then he gave us the keys to his heavenly mansion! We didn't pay Jesus to serve as our substitute. Indeed, we were the enemy that Jesus should have been fighting against!

Jesus has won forgiveness for all of your sins. Does this sound too good to be true? Satan wants you to think that and so we pray, "Hallowed be your name. Show the holiness of your reputation to me, O Lord. Help me trust that you really are my Savior who has paid for every one of my sins and has opened the door to heaven."

You may never feel comfortable buying something off of eBay. That's not surprising considering no eBay merchant has a feedback profile that is 100% positive. But we can be 100% positive about God's reputation. He is a holy God who always does what is right – even though we may not understand his ways. He is also God of love who always keeps his promises. Therefore he is a God that we will want to honor with our words and actions. That's why we pray, "Hallowed be your name. Lord, continue to show the holiness of your reputation to me and through me." Amen.