

Literally countless words have been spoken from the beginning of time. And so many of them had significant consequence, even when spoken simply from one person to another. Sometimes very hurtful words. Sometimes very encouraging words. Sometimes very engaging words. How about taking that literally, like the words “I do”...? Very engaging...hopefully for a lifetime!

Hey, wanna have some fun and learn a lot? Go pick up a copy of John Bartlett’s *Familiar Quotations*—that was the go-to book for finding quotes in the pre-internet era. You can sit and read it for hours, laughing then pondering then tucking a choice morsel away for future use. You know, impactful words strung together by folks like Patrick Henry, the American Patriot, saying “Give me liberty or give me death.” Or the eloquence of Martin Luther King, Jr.: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Or the extraordinary author Willa Cather: “There are some things you learn best in calm...some in storm.”

Words have moved nations and armies and peoples and families...for better and for worse. And words have moved individuals...some to greatness, some to downfall.

Of course, the Bible elevates the importance of words dramatically. Genesis 1 is chock-full of creation power, often through just three words: *And God said...* And John’s Gospel (1:1 in the ESV) says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Yes, and Jesus said this on the Cross: “It is finished.” From beginnings to completions, God often signals it with words. And, of course, there’s everything in-between: the words of kings and prophets...the words of John the Baptist...the words of Apostles...and, of course, the words of Jesus Himself, from the dialogue with Satan to parables to teachings to discipling conversations, all the way to that poignant phrase: “*it...is...finished.*”

All of this is powerful stuff. Ordinary words can be strong, but when God is involved, in fact, when He’s helping to direct traffic...well, then, every person involved can be operating in a whole different realm, at a much more escalated level. And that’s the focus of this episode: *the most powerful words ever spoken.* Yes, you got that right...*the most powerful words ever spoken.*

Now, before we take that and run with it, let’s agree that what we’re focused on here are words that ordinary people can say and deploy. We’re not talking about something God said at creation—of course, that was inconceivably powerful! And we’re not talking about words that only Jesus can say...of course, so much of what He said was also inconceivably powerful! No, we’re talking about what *you and I* can say.

Now, wait a minute, you say, the phrase that you said was “the most powerful words ever spoken”...and that word “spoken” is past tense. Well, that’s because they *were* spoken as documented in the Bible, at two different times, in two different contexts, in two very powerful ways. But these particular words are specifically designed for us to speak, too, here and now and in the future, too. That’s right, these very powerful words are designed for us to speak, today and tomorrow, as part of a victorious walk with Jesus.

But let’s go back to the specifics of when these powerful words come to us. So. Remember when Jesus taught His disciples to pray near the end of His earthly ministry, teaching what’s commonly called the Lord’s Prayer? It’s very likely that you’ve recited this prayer numerous times in your life, hallowing the name of the Father, counting on daily bread, and asking forgiveness for trespasses. And tucked right in there are the most powerful words to ever be uttered by a follower of Christ: *Thy will be done!*

Now these words are so familiar to so many of us that we can be inclined to gloss right over them without thinking, as we are all inclined to do when we are rushed and reciting something that is so familiar, so daily. But there we are. In Jesus’s short prescription for praying, we are instructed to ask for the *Father’s will to be done.* What an amazing prescription from the Lord Jesus Himself! But here’s the truly startling thing: Jesus didn’t just teach or preach this, He practiced exactly what He preached, right when it counted the most! And you know exactly when and where that was...

Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, completely aware of His fate that was coming on Calvary—the pain, the shame, the trial of the Cross. The stress was so great that He was sweating blood. Jesus was fully man, and He prayed to His Father that the cup pass from Him. Here it is: “And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.’” And there are those powerful words to the Father: not as I will, *but as you will!*

And we know what happened. The Father’s will was indeed done and the cup did *not* pass from His Son. Those four powerful words—*but as you will*—changed the course of history forever. Think of it! Jesus was actually applying the Lord’s prayer in His own life: the Father’s will be done! Whoa. Stop and revel in that!

Why is this so incredibly important? There are a couple of very foundational reasons that play directly into the robust Christian life, you know, our lives, yours and mine, here and now!

First, as Jesus instructed, prayers are our direct communications pipeline to the Father, our privilege as His adopted children to make our appeals. But. *But*. I don’t know about you, but more than a few of my prayers are pretty limited in scope, pretty self-centered. And, you see, as mere human beings, we cannot possibly truly understand the fullness of God’s plan for us and those around us. So—listen, this is key—if our motives are shallow or impure, we are asking God to override our desires when our petition is not residing in God’s perfect fullness, *even if that’s in other parts of the very same prayer!* That’s just like Jesus modeled for us in the garden of Gethsemane!

Second, the Bible tells us in James 5:16 that “the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” Righteous, you might object, I don’t feel very righteous sometimes! But Romans 3:21-22 instructs us that “now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.” Wow, our prayers have great power as a result of the righteousness imputed to us solely by our faith in Christ! But if we’re invoking our fleshly desires in our prayers, then we truly, truly need to add this overriding corrective: *but...your...will...be...done!*

So, the integrated truth is told here in all these Bible verses. Let’s string these elements to make the case...

1. We are instructed to pray for our Father’s will to be done.
2. We are instructed in 1 Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing”—so, at least daily, we ask for exactly that...our Father’s will to be done.
3. We are instructed that we are righteous through faith in Christ.
4. We are instructed that the prayer of a righteous person has great power.
5. We see the Son of God asking His Father to do the Father’s will even when the Father’s will directly countered Jesus’s direct petition for the cup to pass from Him.
6. We see that the Father did exactly that—the Father’s will was that His Son drink the cup! And the glory of the Cross was the result!

We can only conclude we have pretty extreme daily power in our daily prayers as disciples of Christ—*when* it’s specifically with the petition for any necessary, overriding working of God’s will being made part and parcel of those prayers. And all that’s surely true for *all* our prayers...for vocational issues, missional issues, family issues, spiritual issues, life issues. Otherwise, are we seriously trying to limit God to our often puny, self-centered requests? Well, we are invited to do quite the opposite! You see, our privilege is essentially to exercise our will to invite our Father to override any of our wrong, willful desires with His perfect will. So...

*Father, your will be done.* Those are the most powerful words we are encouraged and privileged to utter every day! The most powerful words ever spoken, including by us, lowly and humble believers! That’s true in the past. That’s true in the present. And that’s true, we know, in the future. Now that’s crazy good!

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. Do you believe as James did, that “the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working”? Is this an expectant bedrock of your prayer life that you have great power due to the righteousness imputed through your faith in Christ? List specific faith-filled prayers that you have seen come true, and ones that you continue to labor in faith for.
  
2. The Bible teaches that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” James 1:17 ESV. Do you believe that a key reason that the Father is not answering some or even many of your prayers may well be because you are not asking for the good option or the near-perfect option...that perhaps you are settling for asking for a lesser outcome? Do you believe you can “fix” that kind of approach by asking him to do His will? Why or why not?
  
3. Do you routinely practice what Jesus practiced in the garden of Gethsemane, inviting the Father to do His will, even when it might well override the key focus of your petition? Why or why not?