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God's Good Spirit (2)

In the midst of his persecutions, David penned Psalm 143, a very personal, penitential psalm. In verse 10, he prays, "Teach me to do thy will."

In this context, this means, first, "teach me to do thy will" in a very difficult situation. David is being persecuted by his enemies (9), probably Saul and his men or Absalom with his forces. He is but a footstep from death, "For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground" (3). It is hard to do God's will in dangerous, stressful circumstances, as we know. How much more so with David, who was assailed much more violently than we are!

Second, David's prayer means "teach me to do thy will" even when I am very low and afflicted. David speaks of dwelling in darkness like those who have been "long dead" (3). Have you ever felt like that? He is "overwhelmed," broken, crushed, "desolate," without comfort or cheer (4). He feels spiritually dry (6), and his spirit fails (7): "I can't hold out any longer! I am tempted to give up and die!" Thus he cries, "Hear me speedily" (7). "It has been so long since I sensed God's covenant mercies!" "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning" (8). It is so difficult to obey the Lord when we are distressed and down, overwhelmed and desolate; when we are covered in darkness, close to death and feeling far from God. So David prayed, "Teach me to do thy will" (10).

Third, his petition means "teach me to do thy will" even when I am plagued with the sense of my guilt: "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (2). David knows his depravity, yet he did not give up!

Notice how practical this prayer is. "Teach me to do thy will" here is not a matter of abstruse theological learning but of deeply practical obedience. David feels the need of a renewed, empowered will so that he can keep God's precepts, despite the distress of his persecution, despite feeling down and dry and dead, despite the oppressive awareness of his terrible sinfulness. "Teach me to do thy will!" is his cry.

The word for "will" here is significant (10). It includes the idea of pleasure, delight, approbation. "Teach me to do Thy will so that in keeping Thy commandments I may please Thee and be aware of Thy approval." Isn't this beautiful? David is persecuted and distressed, feeling desolate, afflicted with his guilt and almost unable to hold out any longer. And what does he ask? "Teach

me to do Thy will and please Thee!” Truly, he is the man after God’s own heart (I Sam. 13:14)! What an example to us!

David bolsters his prayer with an argument: “for thou art my God” (Ps. 143:10). Here he is appealing to the covenant: “I am Thy friend-servant and Thou art my gracious Lord.” In effect, David is saying, “It is truly Thy promise, O Lord, that Thou wilt teach me, strengthen me to do Thy will and enable me to honour and serve Thee, for I am Thy covenant child.” Surely, God answers such prayers! This is how we should pray, especially in all our distresses!

Thus, we return to the Holy Spirit: “Teach me to do thy will ... thy spirit is good.” We must not think that this reference to the Holy Spirit is unrelated to the preceding. Oh no! David knew from experience his need of the Spirit to inspire him to write Scripture (II Sam. 23:1-2) and especially to bring comfort and joy (Ps. 51:12). “I need God’s Spirit!”—this is David’s cry—“for He is good, being full all ethical and moral perfections: mercy, love, righteousness, truth and faithfulness.”

David especially mentions the Spirit because He is the Person of the Holy Trinity whose office it is to touch and heal us in the inmost recesses of our hearts. The same Hebrew word used for God’s Spirit (Ps. 143:10) is used for David’s “spirit” (4, 7), which is closely related to his “soul” (6, 8, 11, 12) and “heart” (4). God’s good Spirit administers divine blessedness, comfort and strength to David’s persecuted soul (3), overwhelmed spirit (4), desolate heart (4) and thirsty, troubled and afflicted soul (6, 11, 12). This is what we need, beloved: God’s Holy Spirit touching and comforting our spirit, soul and heart, by bringing us Jesus Christ and Him crucified through the gospel and so assuring us of the forgiveness of sins, righteousness and God’s fatherly care! As New Testament believers, we know God’s good Spirit of Psalm 143:10 as the Spirit of Christ, the other Comforter whom He pours out on His church.

David’s prayer continues, “Lead me into the land of uprightness” (10). The connection with the other parts of Psalm 143:10 ought clearly to be understood: Jehovah is our covenant God who teaches us to do His will by His good Spirit within us so that He leads us into the land of uprightness. The land of uprightness here is the earthly Canaan as it typifies the heavenly Canaan, the new heavens and the new earth, the glorified cosmos (Rom. 4:13; Heb. 11:9-16). The persecution spoken of in Psalm 143 is probably one of those which drove David out of the promised land physically and rendered him unable to attend Israel’s holy assemblies in the central place of worship.

God leads the believer more and more consciously into the land of uprightness as, by His grace, He enables us to walk uprightly and do His will. The divine leading of our text is not by mystical intuitions but by His guiding us according to Scripture so that we keep His precepts. Only the Holy Spirit can do this, by renewing our wills to obey God’s Word. Thus the believer is enabled to honour his heavenly Father by keeping the ten commandments out of gratitude and so loving the brethren and serving Christ’s church and kingdom—all by the power of God’s good Spirit!

Rev. Stewart

Jehovah's Witnesses and the Name of God (1)

The Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society charge the Christian church with colluding in removing the name "Jehovah" from the Bible, since, e.g., the Authorized Version (AV) renders the name "Jehovah" over 7,000 times as "Lord." Moreover, they claim that, since their New World Translation (NWT) retains the original name "Jehovah," they alone are God's faithful followers.

It is true that in the AV the word "Jehovah" does not appear in the NT and occurs in only a few places in the OT (e.g., Ps. 83:18); otherwise, it is translated Lord in upper case letters. But the issue here is not the translation of the Hebrew word, rendered Jehovah (AV), but the meaning of the name itself. For example, a man might use the word, "Jesus," and sing enthusiastically, "JESUS, He's the one for me," but if he does not believe that "Jesus" is the only, complete, all-sufficient, effectual Saviour of His people (Matt. 1:21), he does not really believe in "Jesus" at all. Or a person might call Jesus, "Lord, Lord," but unless by "Lord" he means Master, Owner, Redeemer, and lives in submission and obedience to Him, his using the word "Lord" is vain hypocrisy (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46).

What, then, does the name Jehovah mean? God Himself explained it to Moses in Exodus 3:14: "I AM THAT I AM ... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." The JWs' translation, the NWT, mistranslates it this way, "I SHALL PROVE TO BE WHAT I SHALL PROVE TO BE." The Hebrew verb is *hayah* which means "to be" and in its verb form (qal imperfect) it may, in itself, be translated as "I am," "I shall be" or "I was." In the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation, used by the Jews in Christ's day and quoted by the apostles in the inspired NT, it is rendered in words which can only mean "I am" (*ego eimi*). The NWT's "I SHALL PROVE TO BE" is, therefore, hardly an accurate translation.

That God identifies Himself with a name derived from the Hebrew verb meaning "to be," best translated "I am," teaches us important truths about the Being of God. First, God is absolutely independent. He derives His Being from Himself and maintains His Being of Himself. He needs nothing outside of Himself (Rom. 11:33-36). Second, God is eternal or timeless: God *is*. No creature can say, "I AM." To be accurate, every creature must say, "I am becoming." In the short time that you have taken to read these lines, a large number of cells in your body have died, your blood has circulated around your body and the air in your lungs has been exchanged for fresh supplies. That is not true of God. He does not need air, food or anything else, and His divine essence never changes. Third, the name Jehovah, I AM, tells us that God is absolutely dependable. He never reneges on His promises. He is the God we can trust fully, whose purposes are always the same. Thus He came to Moses at the burning bush and declared that the lapse of over 400 years had not caused Him to change His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. One Watchtower publication says of the name Jehovah that it means "He can become whatever He pleases in order to fulfil whatever role is necessary." The same publication says that Jehovah is a

God of “innumerable roles.” This is not the meaning of Jehovah, I AM or *ego eimi*.

The JW's claim to believe the divine, verbal inspiration of the OT and NT. They complain that God's name, Jehovah, has been removed from the OT, and they claim that they have restored the word to its proper place. But here is a startling fact: the word Jehovah never appears in the NT Greek, even when the writers are quoting from the OT where the Hebrew text has the word rendered Jehovah. Every time the writers of the NT Scriptures quote the OT, they use the Greek word *kurios*, which means “Lord.” If the Holy Spirit thought that the word “Lord” was an unacceptable translation of Jehovah, would He have not “corrected” that in the NT? After all, there are times when the writers of the NT modify the Septuagint translation from which they quote (the Septuagint translation is not inspired, you know). Why, then, did the Holy Spirit not have the NT writers substitute the word Jehovah for *kurios*, as the JW's' translation, the NWT, has done?

Let me give some examples. Quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, Christ says, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God” (Matt. 4:10). The Hebrew of Deuteronomy has Jehovah; the Septuagint has *kurios* (Lord). What does Matthew write, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? *Kurios*, Lord, not Jehovah! In Acts 2:21, Peter quotes Joel 2:32, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord.” The Hebrew of Joel has Jehovah; the Septuagint has *kurios* (Lord). What does Luke, the human penman of Acts, write, by the Holy Ghost? *Kurios*, Lord, not Jehovah! In Romans 10:16, Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1, “Lord, who hath believed our report?” The Hebrew of Isaiah has Jehovah; the Septuagint has *kurios* (Lord). What does Paul write, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? *Kurios*, Lord, not Jehovah! If the word Jehovah must be used, why does the Holy Spirit never use it in the NT?

Moreover, the JW's' translation, the NWT, adds to the NT the name Jehovah, even when the OT is not being quoted. For example, the NWT translates *kurios* (Lord) as Jehovah in the following passages: II Peter 3:9, “Jehovah [*kurios*] is not slow respecting his promise;” Acts 13:48, “they began to rejoice and to glorify the word of Jehovah [*kurios*];” Revelation 1:8, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says Jehovah [*kurios*] God.” Other examples could be given. In the book of Revelation alone, Jehovah is added at least ten times (4:8, 11; 11:17; 15:3-4; 16:7; 18:8; 19:6; 21:22; 22:5-6). However, when *kurios* refers to Jesus Christ, it is never translated Jehovah (e.g., Phil. 4:5; I Thess. 4:15-17). This shows the bias of the NWT version. I Thessalonians 4 is a particularly interesting example in the NWT: “For this is what we tell you by Jehovah's [*kurios*] word that we the living who survive to the presence of the Lord [*kurios*] shall in no way precede those who have fallen asleep in death, because the Lord [*kurios*] himself shall descend ... be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord [*kurios*] in the air and thus we shall always be with the Lord [*kurios*]” (vv. 15-17). Notice, the first *kurios* is translated Jehovah, but the other examples of *kurios* in the same context are translated Lord. Why? Because clearly they refer to Jesus Christ and the JW's will not recognise His Deity, that Christ is Jehovah God! *Rev. Martyn McGeown, Limerick Reformed Fellowship*

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