

Matthew 6:10; Daniel 2:36-45
Making Heaven the Standard for God's Will on Earth
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven – Mt. 6:10

As we continue to work our way through the Lord's prayer we want to keep in mind the high ideals that come before us throughout the Sermon on the Mount. We see these ideals throughout the Sermon on the Mount but I made it a point of emphasis back in our study of the beatitudes – especially the 6th beatitude – *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*. You may recall that when we studied that beatitude, I made the point that the 6th beatitude soars high above us. It presents to us a very high ideal – the prospect of seeing God; and it presents us with a very high qualification for realizing that idea – being pure in heart.

Arguably, the Lord's entire sermon sets very high standards but you do see statements of the Lord, along the way, that seem to magnify those high standards all the more. We saw this when we made our way through that section in chp. 5 that shows how high the standard of the law applies. It's not enough to render the mere external appearance of obedience to the law. The standard is much higher than that. The law applies just as much to the thoughts and intents of the heart as they do the external actions. And when you reach the end of chp. 5 you come to Christ's exhortation which shows the height of the standards of the law even on a practical basis – *Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven is perfect*.

As we come now to the third petition in the Lord's prayer – *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven* – we see, yet again, another statement that raises the bar very high in terms of what we should seek in prayer and what we should strive for both in our Christian lives as well as the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are aiming for the standard of heaven to be established on earth. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. There is, of course, a strong connection between this petition and the one that precedes it. We've considered already that we're to pray *Thy Kingdom come*. We're taught by that petition to expect that Christ's cause will prevail in this world and that it will prevail in answer to the prayers of God's people. This is how the name of God will at last be hallowed – when God's Kingdom makes great advances in this world and the inhabitants of this world learn the fear of the Lord once again.

The question that should now occupy our minds is this – how much of Christ's Kingdom do we want? How much of Christ's Kingdom should we expect? Is it really Scriptural to expect that God's Kingdom will advance when the world around us seems so dark and is steeped in such deeply entrenched sin? Maybe we should just hope that our own families may be spared from the flood-tide of iniquity. Maybe we shouldn't set our sights any higher than attaining only what's necessary to survive in such a dark and decadent age.

This 3rd petition in the Lord's prayer sets a much higher standard than that. Look at it again – *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Can you see in this petition how high Christ is raising the bar? Can you see how much ground we must gain before we can be

satisfied? Christ would not have us aim merely to survive. He would not have us duck out of sight into some shadowy corner of obscurity and there hope that the forces of evil will take no notice of us. On the contrary – Christ sets before us the very standard of heaven itself. And in answer to the question – how much of Christ's Kingdom should we expect to see in this world? - the answer is that we should be satisfied with nothing less than the standard of heaven being established on earth. *Thy will be done on earth* – how should God's will be done on earth? In what manner should we pray for God's will to be done on earth? To what extent should we pray that God's will be done on earth? To which the answer is given – *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Can you see from this petition how Christ makes heaven the standard for God's will being done on earth? Do you begin to catch the vision of the kind of transformation that we're to pray for? What a high ideal is this! - God's will being done on earth the way it's done in heaven! What power it would take to bring such a thing about. Nothing short of the Kingdom of God pulling down strongholds and overthrowing bastions of deeply entrenched sin and then conquering this present world in such a way as to establish righteousness – nothing short of such things as these can suffice to meet the standard that Christ sets before us in this petition. What a positive outlook this petition ought to create in our hearts.

I want to focus on the theme of this petition this morning – the theme of making heaven the standard for God's will on earth. If I could express my vision and burden in a word – it would be this:

We Must Make Heaven the Standard for God's Will on Earth

And in the moments that remain I want to set before you 3 ways in which we can and should make heaven the standard for God's will on Earth. If we would make heaven the standard for God's will on earth, then, we must do so first of all:

I. By Knowing the Standard of Heaven

What do we know of the standards of heaven? Indeed, what do we know about heaven itself? There is a sense in which heaven is so far beyond us that it becomes unlawful to even attempt to describe it. 2Cor. 12 gives us Paul's testimony about being caught up to the third heaven. In other words he was caught up to the highest heaven which is presented to us as the very abode of God Himself. Paul writes in 2Cor. 12:4 *How he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.* The glory of heaven is such that it defies description in such a way that it's best not to even attempt describing it.

We are only given glimpses of heaven along the way throughout God's word. The blinding glory of God's abode is more than we can handle. It can certainly be said with regard to heaven that we see through a glass darkly. Indeed – we discover in one of those glimpses in Isaiah 6 that the very angels of heaven can hardly deal with the glory of it. {cf.

Isa. 6:1-4}. From the glimpse of heaven that is given to us in Isa. 6 there are a few things that we can observe regarding the standard of heaven.

It becomes quite apparent from the cry of the angels one to another that holiness is the standard of heaven. This standard alone puts heaven beyond us. We hardly begin to describe holiness except in terms of what it's not. And to discover what it's not all we need do is look around us in the world in which we live. What do we see? We see infidelity – holiness stands in contrast to that. We see perverse sin – holiness is certainly not that. We see rebellion – we see defilement and depravity – we see each man turning to his own way – we see guilt and misery – we see pride and arrogance and destruction. Basically most of what we see needs to be removed before we can begin to envision what holiness encompasses.

We do know, in fact, that there was a time when God's will was done on earth the way it's done in heaven. Before the fall of man into sin, this world was a holy paradise. But since the time of man's fall this world has been so tainted with man's sin that we really have to struggle to even imagine what a world of paradise must have been like. And yet this holiness is the standard of heaven and if God's will is to be done on earth the way it's done in heaven then holiness must lay the foundation for that standard.

Do we not perceive from Isaiah 6 that closely related to holiness as a standard of heaven we can also say that reverence is the standard of heaven. Reverence is depicted by the way the angels cover their faces and their feet. We can certainly draw the practical application from the covering of the angels that modesty in our dress is becoming to reverence and is in keeping with holiness. I think it's fair and accurate to say that reverence leads to covering and a lack of reverence leads to exposure.

I can remember several years ago a preacher describing his experience of doing door to door work. He and one of his members was giving out the gospel and they came across a lady in a house who invited them in. This lady, it seems, was dressed very immodestly. She was wearing a two piece bathing suit. The two men sat in separate chairs and the lady sat on the couch and as they proceeded to speak to her of sin and judgment and wrath to come they noticed that as they spoke the woman would take a pillow from the couch and seek to cover herself. And the longer they spoke and reasoned from the gospel the more this lady reached for more pillows in order to cover herself more. Before they were done this lady had every pillow within her reach leaning against her or providing some covering for her. Doesn't her conduct reveal that her conscience knew that the standard of heaven is reverence?

There is another place where we can look to see the standard of heaven. And in this case we have the only instance in all the Bible, since the fall of man, where we can see the standard of heaven being applied to this earth. We find that standard met in the life of Christ. By looking to Christ we see God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. Here we are able to gain a more extensive look at God's will being done on earth the way it's

done in heaven for we see, in Christ, one who veiled His glory by taking to Himself a true body and reasonable soul. We are not, in this case blinded by the glory of holiness.

And so we see in Christ other aspects of God's will being done on earth in accordance with the standard of heaven. For we see in Christ one who rendered perfect obedience to His Father. *I do always those things that please him* – Christ could say in Jn. 8:29. *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me* He would say to the woman at the well in Jn. 4:34. *Nevertheless not my will but thine be done* He would say with the cross looming before Him (Lk. 22:42). Perfect obedience to all the revealed will of God becomes the standard established by Christ for God's will being done on earth.

And so from Christ's example we can say regarding the will of God that it should be done as our highest priority so that we make it our meat; and it should be done completely and should encompass our thoughts, words, actions and motives; and it should be done submissively and without complaint.

The standard of heaven, then, being done on earth can be defined as Christ-likeness. As we're conformed to His image we will also find ourselves being conformed to the standard of heaven which will lead to God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. We see, then, something of the standard we're striving to meet. Would you consider with me next that if we would make heaven the standard of God's will we must do so:

II. By Striving for the Standard of Heaven

When you consider how high the standard of heaven is, the temptation might easily be to reason – *what's the use?* I can't possibly meet such a standard. We can hardly comprehend the standard of heaven much less reach it. Why should I strive for something that is as far beyond me as heaven is beyond earth?

The solution to what may initially be our dilemma is, of course, found in Christ. Remember the statement back in 5:17 which conveys to us the essence of the gospel. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.* Christ came to meet the standard of heaven in all the demands of the law of God. And He met heaven's standards by rendering perfect obedience to the law of God. And then He paid for our failures and our transgressions toward heaven's standards through His atoning death.

This puts our striving in a completely different light, then – even the light of the gospel. Rising to heaven's standards begins with the presentation of ourselves to God based on the mercies of God. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

The mercies of God, in Christ, become the motivating forces behind our striving. And our striving amounts to two things. The first is resisting sin – *Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof* (Rom. 6:12). Why do we

wage this resistance to sin? Because we would have God's will done on earth as it is in heaven. The battle begins in our own hearts and lives. We raise the banner of the cross against our own sins. We strive to resist sin because we would be like Christ. We strive to resist sin because Christ Himself bore our sins and took away our condemnation. We owe Him our highest allegiance and so we resist sin on account of our love to Him.

And then our striving takes the form of yielding. *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God* (Rom. 6:13).

Our striving, then, can be described as the striving of triumph. The victory has been won for us and given to us. Our striving takes place in the realm of grace which is the realm of sins forgiven. It's the realm of our justification and our freedom from condemnation. We are not striving to be something – we're striving because we already are something. We are righteous in Christ. Our striving, therefore, becomes the striving to rise to what we are in Christ.

This is the beginning of seeing God's will done on earth as it is in heaven. It begins with our own personal sanctification. It begins with our own individual pursuit of heaven. The standard of heaven must first be won in our own minds as we learn how to conform our thinking to God's thinking. Paul exhorts us to strive to establish heaven's standard in our minds when he writes in 2Cor. 10:5 that *we're to cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

You begin to see how intricately woven together these petitions are in the Lord's prayer? How is the standard of heaven established on earth? It's established by the hallowing of God's name. And what will it take for God's name to be hallowed among the inhabitants of the earth? It will take the advancement of the Kingdom of God. And how is that Kingdom advanced? How do I gain the motivation to strive for the advancement of that Kingdom and the heavenly standards of that Kingdom? We gain the motivation for such advancement by realizing the costly blessing of addressing God as *Our Father which art in heaven*. I call this a costly blessing because it cost Christ His life-blood in order for us call God our Father.

So the establishment of the heavenly standard of God's will begins in our own hearts and lives but it doesn't end there. We are seeking more than our own personal advancement. The standard is much higher than that. We not only want to see our own selves and our own families and our own church rise to the occasion of doing God's will on earth as it's done in heaven – but we want the entire world to be brought up to this standard. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Is any part of the globe left out when Christ uses the phrase *on earth*?

We want the world conquered for King Jesus. We want the strongholds of sin to be rooted up, pulled down, and overthrown. With the Psalmist we cry in Ps 45:3,4 *Gird thy*

sword upon [thy] thigh, O [most] mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness [and] righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Could this not correspond to what we find in Rev. 6:2? In that verse we discover that we look for Christ to be mounted upon the white horse going forth conquering and to conquer.

This leads to my final consideration this morning. And that is that if we would make heaven the standard for God's will on earth, we must do so:

III. By Praying for that Standard to be Established on Earth

I know that I'm dwelling on the obvious here when I say that we must pray for the standard of heaven to be established in the earth. In our last study I made the remark that the 2nd and 3rd petitions in the Lord's prayer serve to greatly encourage us. *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* These petitions encourage us to believe that the cause of Christ is destined to triumph in the earth.

God does not give us these petitions in order to mock us. He would not teach us to pray over matters that are contrary to His will. If we are taught to pray for the standard of heaven to be established in the earth it must be because it is God's will for that standard to be established.

I know that I've pointed out at various times that I take v. 10 of the Lord's prayer to be the grounds upon which we can pray for revival. What do we look for in revival? We look for great transformation to take place. And don't we know that if the standard of heaven is to be established in the earth then great transformation needs to take place. It's no wonder that the critics of Paul and his associates complained in Acts 17:6 that *these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.* This is what it takes for the standard of heaven to be established in the earth. It takes the turning of the world upside down.

People are not willing for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Quite the opposite is the case – the kings of the earth and the rulers take counsel against the Lord's anointed. They conspire together to break the Lord's bands asunder and to cast away the cords of His ways.

We see the manifestations of this conspiracy for sin everywhere around us. How else can sin be sanctioned and God's law be banned? How else can darkness be called light and light be called darkness? There is a strong aversion to the Lord's will being done on earth. Each one turns to his own way and in his puffed up pride thinks that everyone else should submit to him. And we've seen the dismal effects of this stubborn pride and self-righteousness for many years now.

What can possibly break the stranglehold of sin? What can possibly penetrate the arrogant pride and the spirit of self-righteousness that governs the hearts of rebellious sinners? I love the statement found in Psalm 110:3 which tells us *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*

When the Lord moves with power and might then the tide is turned. When the Lord makes effectual the preaching of the gospel then the impact of the gospel can't be resisted. If the disciples of Christ prayed as they were taught to pray then we have every reason to believe that during the days that preceded Pentecost they would have prayed *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come and there was an outpouring of God's Spirit and Peter was empowered to preach the gospel – what happened? It can certainly be argued that the Kingdom of God made great advances and God's will certainly was done on earth in much closer alignment to how His will is done in heaven.

These petitions, then, hold out to the people of God optimistic hope. They contain the hope that no matter how bleak things appear the tide can be turned – the world can be turned upside down again. Let's utilize these petitions, then. Let's not allow ourselves to sink into despair. God's will is for His Kingdom to advance. How far would God's Kingdom advance? How much should we expect from God? Our text holds a very high standard – *Thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven*.

Let's not settle for anything less, then, in our praying and in our expectations. It is true that the Lord tries His saints. He does bear long with His people – but He does so in order that His people will ask and seek and knock and keep asking and keep seeking and keep knocking. Let's not give the God of heaven any rest, therefore, until the standard of heaven is established in the earth. May the Lord so move on our hearts that we pursue heaven's standards for our own lives and that we seek heaven's standards to be established in the earth. This is the will of God. May His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.