

**OUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

Matthew 6:9-10

**Intro:** We are living in days in which there is very little appreciation for the majesty and glory of God among those of us who profess to be the people of God. Reverence for the Person of God is practically unknown. There seems to be more of a tendency to deify man and to humanize God. God is often addressed in prayer as though we were on an equal basis with Him. We know so little about what it means to stand in awe of God, or to be silent before Him. Our understanding of God is not the result of searching the Scriptures, but of following the instructions of some men who are more concerned about pleasing people than they are about worshipping God “in spirit and in truth.”

When the Lord Jesus said that we were to pray, saying, “Our Father,” He certainly did not mean that we should treat God with such familiarity that we would forget that He is God, the God of heaven and earth, the One Who is God from everlasting to everlasting. And it seems from our text that one way the Lord sought to protect us from much that is going on in our churches today as well as in the practices of individual Christians, is seen in the fact that He not only said that when we pray, we are not only to say, “Our Father,” but that we should say, “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name.” We must never forget that while, by the new birth, He is our Father, yet He is *our heavenly Father!* And by that word *heavenly* the Lord Jesus meant that there is a great difference between God and all of the rest of us. Let us take some time today to think about those words,

**I. “OUR FATHER, WHICH ART IN HEAVEN” (Matt. 6:9m).**

Last week I read to you the verses in Matthew 6 in which our Lord referred to God by the term, “Father.” Let me repeat those in which our Lord combined “Father” with some form of the word “heaven.”

Please look with me at 6:1, 14, 26, 32.

When we add our text, 6:9, we see that God our Father is “in heaven,” and also that He is heavenly, *our heavenly Father*. Now, while the words are similar, they are not identical.

Let us take our text first, which is similar to what we see in 6:1. It tells us that our Father is “in heaven.” That is His dwelling place. Heaven is God’s throne. That was made clear to Isaiah from what we read in the first two verses of Isaiah 66:

1        Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

2        For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD ... (Isa 66:1-2a).

But before that, what Solomon was praying for the people at the dedication of the temple he had built, no less than four times did he refer to heaven as God's dwelling place. See 1 Kings 8:30, 39, 43, 49.

When God was revealing to Isaiah the glory of His own Person, while not mentioning heaven as such, He described it in this way:

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isa. 57:15).

Speaking of the heavens and the earth as a part of God's creation, the Psalmist said this:

4        The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.

5        Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,

6        Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! (Psa. 113:4-6).

He "dwelleth on high," far above the heavens which we can see. His dwelling place is what the Apostle Paul called, "the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2). No man ever saw what the Apostle Paul saw, and he was never permitted to tell what he saw, but it was a life-transforming experience to the Apostle.

There is no question but that the fact that our Father is "in heaven" is intended to magnify the greatness and glory of our Father, and at the same time to humble us by way of the eternal contrast that there is between us and our heavenly Father. The fact that we are His children, is no reason for us to boast. He loves us, and He has chosen us, in spite of what we are. If it were not for the grace of God, God would have had nothing to do with us. *And if there is ever a time when we need to remember this, it is when we come to our Father in prayer!* In fact, Solomon gives us this word of exhortation:

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few (Ecc. 5:2).

In Matt. 5:34 our Lord spoke of heaven as "God's throne." This certainly is an indication that for God to be in heaven speaks of His absolute sovereignty over all of His creation. There is not a nation nor an individ-

ual who can even begin to approach the greatness of our Father in heaven – not even all men, nations, and all other creatures combined!

But what about the word, “heavenly”? He is *our heavenly Father*.

It supports the idea that heaven is His dwelling place, His home, His throne, but it also indicates that He Himself is “heavenly.” It is He Who makes heaven, heaven. He is a celestial Being. We have in this expression an indication of *the Deity of God*. While we can speak of angels as celestial beings, yet they are but creatures. Our heavenly Father is the Creator, the infinitely holy and majestic God. How incredible it is that we, sinners by nature and too often sinners by choice, should be called children of the living God.

Can’t you see in all of this that we need to approach God with a deep realization of how glorious He is, and how sinful and unworthy we are by way of contrast? Our Lord was certainly teaching His disciples, and us, that we are always to approach God in prayer with a profound realization of how glorious He is, and how unworthy we are to be able to say to Him, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” *our heavenly Father*.”

But now let us go on to the next expression:

## II. “HALLOWED BE THY NAME” (Matt. 6:9b).

That word, “hallowed,” is an old English word which we don’t use anymore. Actually it is a very familiar word in the Greek NT. It is the aorist imperative passive of the verb *ἀγιάζω*, the word *to sanctify*, or *to make holy*.

Obviously we don’t make God’s Name holy; it is already holy, and has always been holy. But we are to regard His name as holy. We are to have the greatest reverence for His Name. Actually the basic idea in this word *sanctify* is *to separate*. This means that we are to recognize that God’s Name is distinct from all other names. There is no name like His Name. Only the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit share the glory of the Father’s Name. The Lord was pronouncing the greatest judgment upon the Jews when He said to them,

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).

And do you remember what the Lord said about how people were to be baptized? This is what He said to His disciples:

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is

given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name [singular] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

As I read to you a moment ago from Isa. 57:15, God's Name is "Holy," and the only way to approach Him is with a humble and a contrite spirit. All of this is what our Lord had in mind when He said,

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name.

But there are two more points that have to do with the glory of our heavenly Father.

### **III. "THY KINGDOM COME" (Matt. 6:10a).**

It has long been recognized by those who have studied the Gospel of Matthew that in this Gospel we see our Lord Jesus Christ as a King. We know that the day will come when the Lord will reign on the earth as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15).

When John the Baptist came preaching, announcing the coming of the Messiah, his message was, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Matthew is the only Gospel writer who spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. He also spoke of the Kingdom of God, but his use of that term was more limited. The other Gospel writers spoke of the Kingdom of God.

These terms are used in a twofold way. One has to do with the work of salvation which God is doing in the hearts of His people. Nicodemus, for example, was told that unless he was born again, he could not enter or see the Kingdom of God. So the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," has to do with the spread of the Gospel and the salvation of God's elect people. And it was for this purpose that our Lord Jesus Christ came to the earth. But this term is used also in a literal and earthly sense. As I have already mentioned, the Lord will one day reign over all the earth. His rule will be a rule of righteousness. He will put down all other rule and authority, and will establish a righteousness Kingdom.

The purposes of God are certain, having been established in eternity past. And yet here the Lord plainly taught that we are to pray for the fulfillment

of those purposes. This request is very similar to the prayer of the Apostle John which is recorded in the last chapter of the Bible where, after surveying the events which will lead up to the establishing of our Lord's earthly kingdom, and the Lord's promise, "Surely I come quickly," the Apostle John prayed, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

As the Lord taught His disciples to pray, He did not go into details with reference to the coming of the Lord. He simply taught the disciples to pray that the kingdom of God would come. This means that we are all to understand that there is only one hope for the spread of righteousness in the earth, and that is, first and day by day, through the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. But we are also to understand that there will be no world-wide peace until the Lord Jesus Christ is reigning upon the earth. If we understand this, we will not only be praying for the coming of the Lord's rule in the hearts of men, and finally upon the whole earth, but we will be living to spread the Gospel by the testimony of our lives and the witness of our lips.

In these days of so much sin and corruption in the world it is more apparent than ever that the rule of God in the hearts of men, is the only hope we have.

But closely related to this request is the request that comes at the end of verse 10:

#### **IV. "THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN" (Matt. 6:10b).**

If there is one thing that most people are not concerned about today, it is the will of God. But to think of a time when the will of God will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven among the redeemed people of God, and among the elect angels, seems to be a hopeless dream. And yet it is a great certainty growing out of the sovereign purposes of God. *Doing the will of God is the evidence in a person's life of genuine salvation.* Note what the Lord would say before His Sermon on the Mount would be concluded. Cf. Matt. 7:21-23:

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Notice that “iniquity,” or sin, is any failure to do the will of God. We as believers here on earth at the present time seek to do the will of God, but we don’t do it as it is done in heaven!

Speaking of the will of God being done in heaven, David spoke of how the will of God is presently done in heaven as he concluded Psalm 103.

Listen to his words:

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul (Psa. 103:19-22).

There is a way in which the will of God is being done in the earth right now, and Nebuchadnezzar gave testimony to that many years ago when he said,

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:34, 35).

But this is not what the Lord Jesus had in mind. He was thinking of a future time when the will of God would be done on earth as it is in heaven, not because people have to, but because they will want to – as David Brown said in his commentary on Matthew, cheerfully and constantly and perfectly.

Among those in heaven who do the will of God, none can equal our Lord Jesus Christ. And when He came to earth, He came with one consuming purpose in mind: to do the Father’s will! And this He did without a single failure! And even now this is to be our purpose. Cf. Rom. 12:1-2.

**Concl:** This is as far as we will go today in dealing with this most wonderful prayer which our Lord taught. But let me ask myself and all of you if our lives today are in harmony with what we have seen in this prayer. It is wonderful to be able to call God our Father, but do we

remember what it means that He is in heaven? Do we recognize the holiness of His Name, and give Him the reverence which is due to Him? And what do we consider to be the hope of the world – the Democrats? I hope not. The Republicans? I hope not! Education? I hope not. Financial prosperity? I hope not. A world with no disease? There are many things which are beneficial in their place, but only through knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, and finally in the Kingdom which He will establish, will there be peace.

And if we are praying that the will of God will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, then let us be very, very careful that today and every day our purpose is to do the will of God as He has revealed His will in His Word. Our prayers, to be sincere, must be the expression of our own hearts. It is mere hypocrisy to bring requests to God which are not the real expression of our own hearts' desire.

Closing verses: Heb. 13:20-21.