

WEEK 7 — OUTLINE

Serving God by Prayer according to His Heart and Will

Scripture Reading: Eph. 6:18; Ezek. 36:37; Isa. 62:6-7; 1 John 5:14-16a; Matt. 6:5-6, 9-15; 26:39

<< DAY 1 & DAY 2 >>

- I. In the universe there are three wills: the divine will, the satanic will, and the human will; God wants man's will to be joined to Him and to be one with Him so that man may express and echo His will back to Him in prayer for His good pleasure (Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 6:10; 7:21; 26:39; Phil. 2:13):**
- A. The tree of life represents God with His divine will, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents Satan with his satanic will, and Adam represents man with his human will; we have lost many spiritual blessings because we have not expressed God's will, according to the principle of the tree of life, through our prayers (Gen. 2:9).
 - B. A genuine man of prayer is one whose desires are fully blended into God's desires and whose thoughts are fully one with God's thoughts; he is a man in whom God's desires are imprinted, a man of revelation whose heart is a duplication of God's heart (1 Sam. 2:35; 3:21; 12:23).
 - C. Prayers that originate from our needs to satisfy our own lust may be answered by God, but they have no spiritual value, and we will become weak before His eyes and unpleasing to Him (Psa. 106:14-15; cf. Num. 11:18-35).
 - D. Only the prayers that are initiated by God and echo what He has initiated have any spiritual value; we must learn to pray this kind of prayer (Eph. 6:18; Ezek. 36:37; Isa. 62:6-7; 1 John 5:14-16a).
 - E. When we come to the Lord in prayer, we need to allow the Spirit to mingle our desires with His desires, lead our thoughts into His thoughts, and imprint His desires and thoughts into us; then the prayers that we utter to God with His inward desires will be precious, weighty, and valuable to Him and will cause Satan to suffer loss (Rom. 8:26-27; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2, 12; Mark 9:28-29; Eph. 6:10-20).
 - F. The real meaning of prayer and of all spiritual work is that they consist of four steps:
 1. God intends to do something according to His will.
 2. He reveals His will to us through the Spirit for us to know His will.
 3. We return and echo His will back to Him through prayer.

4. God accomplishes His work according to His will.
- G. God needs man to exercise his spirit with his resurrected will to pray according to God's divine will for Christ to be manifested and enjoyed by us, for the Body life to be practiced by us, and for the Body of Christ to be built up through us (Heb. 10:5-10; Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 1:4-6, 9, 11, 22b-23; 3:16-19; 4:16).
- H. We have to pray according to God's desire and His will for the fulfillment of His economy; then we have the assurance that we have received what we have prayed for (Mark 11:22-26).

« DAY 3 »

II. Hannah's prayer was an echo, a speaking out, of the heart's desire of God; it was a human cooperation with the divine move for the carrying out of God's eternal economy (1 Sam. 1:10-20):

- A. God could motivate Hannah as a person who was one with Him on the line of life; the line of life is a line that brings forth Christ for the enjoyment of God's people, that on earth God may have His kingdom, which is the church as the Body of Christ, the very organism of the Triune God (John 10:10; Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17-18; Eph. 1:22-23).
- B. As long as God can gain a person who is one with Him on the line of life, He has a way on earth; Hannah's prayer indicates that God's move with His answer to Hannah's prayer was to produce a Nazarite, an overcomer, who was absolute for the fulfilling of God's desire (1 Sam. 1:19—2:11).

« DAY 4 »

III. Elijah, "a man of like feeling with us,...prayed in prayer" (James 5:17, lit.):

- A. A prayer from the Lord was given to Elijah, in which he prayed; he prayed in the prayer given to him by the Lord for the accomplishing of His will.
- B. Elijah did not pray in his feeling, thought, intention, or mood, or in any kind of motivation, arising from circumstances or situations, to fulfill his own purpose.

IV. Daniel was a man of prayer who was joined to God's desire through God's word; only those who join themselves to God's word to pray prayers of God's economy can be of real use to God (Eph. 6:17-18; Dan. 9:2-3, 17):

- A. The highest expression of a man who cooperates with God is in prayer; such a man is a man of preciousness to God, even preciousness itself (10:11, 19; 9:23).

B. Daniel depended on prayer to do what man could not do, and he depended on prayer to understand what man could not understand (2:14-23; 6:10; 10:1-21).

<< DAY 5 >>

V. Abraham lived in intimate fellowship with God and became God's friend; even before the incarnation, Jehovah as Christ appeared to Abraham in human form, with a human body, and communed with him on a human level (Gen. 13:18; 18:1-2, 13-15, 22; James 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8):

A. The glorious intercession that Abraham made before God was a human, intimate conversation between two friends, an intimate talk according to the unveiling of God's heart's desire (Gen. 18:1-33; Rom. 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:1, 8; Matt. 6:6).

B. As Abraham was enjoying sweet fellowship with God, he received a revelation from Him regarding the birth of Isaac and the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 18:9-22):

1. This shows that God's intention is to work Christ into us, to bring Christ forth through us, and to destroy the "Sodom" in our home life, our work life, and our Christian and church life (Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; 1 Cor. 5:7-8).
2. In our intimate fellowship with God, we receive the revelation that all the impossibilities become possibilities with Christ (Gen. 18:14-15; 21:2-7; Luke 18:27).

C. God revealed to Abraham His intention to destroy Sodom, because He was seeking an intercessor (Gen. 18:17-22; cf. Heb. 7:25; Isa. 59:16; Ezek. 22:30).

D. Genesis 18 presents a clear revelation of the basic principles of intercession:

1. The proper intercession is not initiated by man but by God's revelation; thus, it expresses God's desire and carries out God's will (vv. 17, 20-21; 19:27-29; Psa. 27:4-8; Heb. 4:16; 7:25).
2. Apparently, Abraham was interceding for Sodom; actually, he was interceding for Lot by implication (Gen. 14:12; 18:23; 19:1, 27-29), showing that we should intercede for God's people who have drifted into the world.
3. Intercession is an intimate conversation with God according to the inward intention of His heart; for this we must learn to linger in the presence of God (18:22-33).
4. Intercession is according to God's righteous way; in Abraham's intercession for Lot, he did not beg God according to His love and grace; he challenged God according to His righteous way (vv. 23-25; Rom. 1:17).
5. Abraham's intercession did not terminate with his speaking but with God's, showing that genuine intercession is God's speaking in our speaking (Gen. 18:33; Rom. 8:26-27).

VI. The pattern of prayer that the Lord taught the disciples in Matthew 6 is the prayer that expresses God's will (vv. 9-15):

- A. The principle of prayer is to pray in secret to be seen by our Father who sees in secret; we need to pray to the Lord, worship the Lord, contact the Lord, and fellowship with the Lord in a secret way (vv. 5-6):
1. The thing that frustrates us the most from growing in life is the self, and the self enjoys doing things in public display for the glory of men (John 5:44; 12:43).
 2. If we live by the Father's hidden life, we may pray much, but others will not know how much we have prayed (Isa. 45:15).
- B. Matthew 6:9-13 is the Lord's instruction to us to "pray in this way" to "our Father who is in the heavens" (v. 9a); this pattern of prayer can be divided into three sections:
1. The three basic prayers concerning God are related to the Divine Trinity: "Your name be sanctified" is related mainly to the Father; "Your kingdom come," to the Son; and "Your will be done," to the Spirit (vv. 9b-10a):
 - a. This is being fulfilled in this age, and it will be ultimately fulfilled in the kingdom age, when the name of God will be excellent in all the earth, the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of Christ, and the will of God will be accomplished (Psa. 8:1; Rev. 11:15).
 - b. After the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, Christ came to bring the heavenly rule to earth so that the earth could be recovered for God's interest, so that the will of God could be done on earth as in heaven (Matt. 6:10b); the kingdom people must pray for this until the earth is fully recovered for God's will in the coming kingdom age.
 2. The three requests concerning our need are protective prayers: "Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (vv. 11-13a):
 - a. Daily bread indicates a living that is by faith; we should live by faith, on the Father's daily supply.
 - b. The kingdom people should ask the Father to forgive their debts, their failures, their trespasses, as they forgive their debtors to maintain peace (by the arbitrating peace of Christ); we have to clear up any separating factors between us and God and between us and others (vv. 14-15; Col. 3:15).
 - c. Because we know our weakness, we should ask the Father not to bring us into temptation but to deliver us from the evil one, the devil, and from the evil that is out of him (by our being filled with the Spirit) (John 17:15; Eph. 5:16-18; 6:13).

3. The prayer to the Father concludes with three reverent praises as extolling prayers: “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen”; the kingdom is of the Son, which is the realm in which God exercises His power, and the power is of the Spirit, which carries out God’s intention so that the Father may have His corporate expression in glory (Matt. 6:13b):
 - a. Thus, the pattern of the Lord’s prayer begins with the Divine Trinity and ends with the Divine Trinity.
 - b. It also begins with God the Father and ends with God the Father; God the Father is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega.
- C. Such a critical prayer increases our seeking of the kingdom of the heavens as the Father’s heart’s desire and affords us our need of the divine supply of grace to fulfill all the supreme and strict requirements of the kingdom of the heavens for God’s good pleasure.

<< WEEK 7 — DAY 1 >>

Morning Nourishment

Isa. 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.

Matt. 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

In the universe there are three wills: the divine will, the satanic will, and the human will. If we would know how the church can be God's warrior to engage in spiritual warfare, we must know these three wills, these three intentions. God's will, being self-existing, is eternal, uncreated. As created beings, the angels also have a will. One of these angels, an archangel, was appointed by God to rule the universe that existed before the creation of Adam. Because of his high position and his beauty, this archangel became proud. This pride gave rise to an evil intention, which became the satanic will. Therefore, in addition to God's intention, God's will, there is a second intention, a second will, for now the satanic will is set against God's will. (Life-study of Ephesians, p. 527)

Today's Reading

A genuine man of prayer is not only one who comes before God continually but also one whose desires are fully blended into God's desires. In other words, his thoughts are fully one with God's thoughts. This is a very important principle in prayer.

Some prayers originate from our needs....Sometimes God answers our prayers to satisfy our needs. Yet these prayers do not satisfy God's desire [cf. Psa. 106:15]. These prayers are of little worth.

There is another kind of prayer—one that originates from God's needs. It comes from God and is initiated by God. This kind of prayer is valuable. Those who have this kind of prayer must be in God's presence continually, and their desires and thoughts must be mingled with God's desires and thoughts. Because these ones live in God's presence continually, He shows them and touches them with His desires and thoughts. These desires and thoughts become the praying ones' desires, which in turn become their prayer.

God works according to certain laws and principles. Although He can act as He pleases, He does not act recklessly; He acts according to His preordained laws and principles. God is above all laws and principles; He is God, and He can act as He pleases. Yet we see a wonderful thing in the Bible. Although He is so great and can act as He pleases, He acts according to laws, and it seems as if He has voluntarily placed Himself under law and is willing to be governed by law. What are the principles of God's work? One main principle of God's work is the need for man's prayer. He wants man to cooperate with Him in prayer.

There was once a Christian who was very experienced in prayer. He said that all spiritual work consists of four steps. In the first step, God intends to do something; there is God's will. In the second step, He reveals this will to His children through the Spirit so that they know His will, His plan, His desire, and His aspiration. In the third step, God's children return His will back to Him through prayer. Prayer is the echoing of God's will. If our heart is in tune with God's heart, spontaneously we will speak forth God's will. As a result God will accomplish His work in the fourth step.

We will not look at the first and second steps now. We will pay attention to the third step, which is returning God's will back to God. Please pay attention to the word return. All worthwhile prayers are a kind of returning. If our prayer is only for the fulfillment of our plans and wishes, it will not have any value in the spiritual realm. Only the prayers that are initiated by God and that echo what He has initiated have any worth. God's work is governed by prayers. God is willing to do many things, but He will not do them when His people do not pray. He must wait for man to agree with Him before He will do them. This is a great principle of God's work, and it is also one of the most crucial principles in the Bible. (CWWN, vol. 38, pp. 453, 281-282)

Further Reading: Life-study of Ephesians, msg. 63; The Practical and Organic Building Up of the Church, ch. 1; CWWL, 1964, vol. 3, "Prayer in Ephesians," ch. 3; CWWN, vol. 44, "God's Eternal Plan," chs. 86-88

<< WEEK 7 — DAY 2 >>

Morning Nourishment

Mark 11:24 For this reason I say to you, All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them.

Matt. 6:7 And in praying do not babble empty words as the Gentiles do; for they suppose that in their multiplicity of words they will be heard.

The first step in carrying out His will is to pray out God's will and utter His will through our prayer...We have to know that God's will is uttered through our prayers. Therefore, prayers that originate from our self-will are useless prayers. Prayers that are according to God's will originate from God. He conveys His will to us through the Holy Spirit, and then we return the same thought to Him through our prayer. Prayers that are after God's heart have God's will as the starting point; man is merely the transmitting and responding organ...God is ready to do many things, but without our consent, He still has to wait...Although we cannot force God to do what He does not want to do, we can ask Him to do what He wants to do. We have lost many spiritual blessings because we have not expressed God's will through our prayers. (CWWN, vol. 38, pp. 284-285)

Today's Reading

We must learn to pray this kind of prayer, [which originates from God's need]. Although we are childish and weak, we must still come into His presence and allow His Spirit to mingle our desires with His desires and to lead our thoughts into His thoughts so that we can touch and participate in His desires and thoughts. If we do this, we will understand something of God's way and demands on man...We should allow God's Spirit to lead us into His heart. We should spend time to learn this lesson. When we first begin to pray in this way, there is no need to say or consider much. Our heart should be calm and undisturbed. We can bring the things we have encountered into God's presence and consider them, or we can forget about these things and simply meditate on God's Word. We can remain in His presence, touching God in our spirit and allowing God to touch us in the spirit. Actually, we do not have to go to God to touch Him; we can simply wait on Him. While we wait on Him in this way, something will come to our attention, and we will gain something. Then we will touch God's desire. The greatest wisdom comes from this kind of waiting. In this way our desires are mingled with God's desires, and our thoughts are one with God's thoughts. Based on this, we can pray to God.

When we bring our desires and thoughts to God, He will imprint His desires and thoughts into us to the extent that they become our desires and thoughts. These prayers are the most precious of all prayers; they are the most weighty prayers.

If God is grieved and sorrowful over man's condition of death, the same grief and sorrow will be imprinted in us, and we will have a desire to see man delivered from death. There will be a groaning within that will be turned into prayer. If God is grieved and anxious over His children's failures and this is imprinted in us, we will also have a desire to see that none of His children fall into sin or darkness. We will utter such prayers and supplications from within; we will confess our sins and ask for His forgiveness and cleansing of His children...Brothers and sisters, when we come to God and His desires are imprinted in us, these desires will become our breath and groaning. Prayers that are precious and weighty are those that are based on inward desires. (CWWN, vol. 38, pp. 453-455)

In Mark 11:24 the Lord said, "All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them."...We have to pray according to God's will for the fulfillment of His economy. Then we are one with God and the right persons in God's eyes. Then we have the assurance that we have received what we have prayed for. (The God-man Living, pp. 144-145)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 38, chs. 41, 59; The God-man Living, msg. 16

<< WEEK 7 — DAY 3 >>

Morning Nourishment

1 Sam. 1:10-11 And she was bitter in soul and prayed to Jehovah and wept much. And she made a vow and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your female servant and remember me and not forget Your female servant, but give to Your female servant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head.

In the midst of the chaos of the degraded Israel, Elkanah and Hannah remained in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose. The line of life is a line to bring forth Christ for the enjoyment of God's people that on earth God may have His kingdom, which is the Body of Christ, the very organism of the Triune God.

God's salvation is mainly for our benefit, whereas God's purpose is related to the fulfilling of God's desire. We need to ask ourselves whether we are here for our profit or for God's purpose. Today on this earth everyone is concerned for his own profit....In the Lord's recovery, we are for God's purpose, remaining in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose, which is to gain the Body, the organism of the Triune God, that He may have a full expression in a corporate way. (Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel, p. 10)

Today's Reading

This couple was in cooperation with the move of God on earth for the accomplishment of God's economy. Elkanah and Hannah were not the only ones moving; they were moved by the moving One, by the unique, divine Mover, who was moving secretly behind the scene. Under God's sovereign dealing, Hannah was suppressed in her soul with a burden in her spirit to pour out before Jehovah. This was God's move. Because of God's moving in her, Hannah could not have peace until she prayed for a son. God, the sovereign One, kept moving her and motivating her so that she had to pray, even though Eli, the one taking care of the service in God's house, did not understand her. In her prayer Hannah cooperated with the move of God.

God could motivate Hannah as a person who was one with Him in the line of life. As long as He can gain such a person, He has a way on earth. I hope that at least some of us will be today's Hannahs and say, "Lord, if You have anything on Your heart to accomplish for Your purpose, I am here. I am remaining in the line of life for the carrying out of Your economy." If you do this, I have the full assurance that you will be the ones whom God will move. He will come to you and motivate you. God needs many Hannahs, persons who can bring forth some Samuels to turn the age.

The origin of Samuel was especially his God-seeking mother with her prayer (1 Sam. 1:9-18). Her prayer was an echo of the heart's desire of God. Her prayer was a human cooperation with the divine move for the carrying out of God's eternal economy....God wanted a Samuel, yet He needed Hannah's cooperation to pray to Him, saying, "Lord, I need a son." This prayer was very human, yet it was a cooperation with the divine move for God's economy....This is the principle of incarnation.

God's move with His answer to Hannah's prayer was to produce a Nazarite who was absolute for the fulfilling of His desire. A Nazarite is one who is consecrated to God absolutely. A Nazarite could never cut his hair or drink wine. In the Bible, long hair signifies the headship, the authority. A Nazarite's keeping his hair long was a sign that just as a female takes her husband as her head, he takes God as the Head, considering God his Husband. Thus, a Nazarite is one who submits himself to God, taking God as the Head, the authority. This is why Hannah prayed that if the Lord would give her a boy, no razor would come upon his head (v. 11). In the Bible, to drink wine is to enjoy the worldly pleasures. A Nazarite not only submits to God as the authority but also has no interest in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures....If we would be today's Nazarites, [those in the line of life], we must take God as our Head and Husband, submitting to Him, and have no interest in worldly pleasures. (Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel, pp. 10-12)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel, msgs. 1-2

<< WEEK 7 — DAY 4 >>

Morning Nourishment

James 5:17 Elijah was a man of like feeling with us, and he earnestly prayed that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

Dan. 9:3-4 So I set my face toward the Lord God to seek Him in prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed to Jehovah my God and confessed...

[In James 5:17, “earnestly prayed” literally means] prayed in prayer. This indicates that a prayer from the Lord was given to Elijah, in which he prayed. He did not pray in his feeling, thought, intention, or mood, or in any kind of motivation, arising from circumstances or situations, to fulfill his own purpose. He prayed in the prayer given to him by the Lord for the accomplishing of His will. (James 5:17, footnote 1)

Today's Reading

[Daniel] was a man who was always praying. His prayers were not at all common. His prayers were prayers that turned the age. Every time he encountered some crucial matter, he prayed before God. He believed absolutely in prayer. He believed in prayer because he believed in God and not in himself....The highest expression of a man who cooperates with God is in prayer.

Before the king of Babylon called for Daniel, he declared that if none of the magicians or learned ones in Babylon under him could explain the dream, he would destroy them all. Among those who were to be killed were Daniel and his three friends. I fully believe that Daniel would have told his three friends to pray with him. There they afforded God the highest cooperation; they gave God the highest coordination. In their single-hearted prayer, God revealed to Daniel the dream. It was the dream of the king of Babylon, but now Daniel saw it also. Not only did Daniel see that dream in his prayer; he understood its meaning as well. This shows that Daniel was a person living before God; he depended on prayer to do what man could not do, and he depended on prayer to understand what man could not understand. He was a person who cooperated with God in prayer.

The book of Daniel records Daniel as a person who could pray. What Satan wanted to deal with particularly was Daniel's prayer. His prayer touched God's heart and was able to fulfill God's plan. Satan purposely wanted to deal with his prayer and to destroy his prayer. Chapter 6 especially shows us that Satan wanted to damage this praying person through the men under Satan. At least he tried to destroy his prayer and to render him unable to pray.

One remembers the story of King Darius who decreed that within thirty days, anyone who petitioned anything of any god or man besides the king would be cast into the den of lions. Satan's subtle strategy was to utilize the men around King Darius to deal with Daniel, to stop Daniel from praying, and eventually to ensnare Daniel, the man of prayer. How did Daniel respond to this? He still prayed as usual and was not at all threatened by it. The Bible is very clear: “Three times daily he knelt on his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his God, because he had always done so previously” (Dan. 6:10). Nothing could stop Daniel's praying. If Daniel had not prayed, Daniel would have failed. As long as Satan could destroy and stop Daniel's prayer, Satan would win. Hence, Daniel's prayer was like a stronghold on a battlefield.

Daniel's prayer reached the highest peak. He asked God to do something for Himself. He prayed, “Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that has been desolated, for the Lord's sake” (Dan. 9:17). I hope that we would circle the words “for the Lord's sake.” We can see that his prayer was totally for God and not for himself. It seems as if he was saying to God, “My supplication here today is not for myself but for You. Even though I am asking You to do something, it is not for myself but for You.” This was a very special prayer; it was also the highest prayer. Our prayers are ninety-nine and nine tenths percent for ourselves. Very few of them are for God. Only a person like Daniel, who prayed to God single-heartedly, can be used by Him to turn the age. (Men Who Turn the Age, pp. 23-28)

Further Reading: Men Who Turn the Age, ch. 2

<< WEEK 7 — DAY 5 >>

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 18:22-23 And the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before Jehovah. And Abraham came near and said, Will You indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?

33 And Jehovah went away as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

As Abraham lived in fellowship with God, God considered him to be his friend (James 2:23; Isa. 41:8; 2 Chron. 20:7). The conversation between Abraham and God in Genesis 18 resembles that between two friends.

As Abraham was enjoying such sweet fellowship with God, he received revelation from Him regarding the birth of Isaac and the destruction of Sodom....The birth of Isaac is related to Christ, and the destruction of Sodom is related to God's judgment upon sin....God's concern is to bring Christ forth through us and to eliminate all the sinful things. He intends to produce Christ and to destroy the "Sodom" in our home life, work life, and even in our Christian and church life. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 671, 673)

Today's Reading

As Abraham was bringing God on His way, "Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" (Gen. 18:17). God could not hide His intention from Abraham, but told him of His intention to judge Sodom [vv. 20-21]....God's heart was concerned about Lot, but He could do nothing for him without an intercessor....Although God did not mention Lot's name, He knew within His heart that Abraham understood what He was doing. God and Abraham spoke to one another in a mysterious way, neither of them mentioning Lot's name.

In Genesis 18 we not only have a story of intercession but a clear revelation of the basic principles of intercession. Intercession is a great thing in the Bible. Without it God's economy cannot be accomplished. The excellent ministry of Christ today as our kingly and divine High Priest is a ministry of intercession [Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25].

Intercession is an intimate talk with God according to the unveiling of His heart's desire. This is the first principle of intercession.

How can we prove that Abraham was actually interceding for Lot? The proof is in Genesis 19:29: "And when God destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out from the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities among which Lot dwelt." We are not told that God remembered Lot but that He remembered Abraham. This verse tells us clearly that God answered Abraham's intercession by rescuing Lot from Sodom.

Just as Abraham interceded for that part of God's people who had drifted into Sodom, so we must intercede for the brothers and sisters who have drifted into the world.

We must learn to linger in the presence of God. If He would begin to walk away, we must stay in His presence and tell Him, "Lord, I don't want to lose Your presence. I want to linger here with You." Your lingering in His presence will open up His heart and draw out His desire.

Intercession is not merely prayer; it is an intimate conversation.

We must challenge God according to His righteousness because His righteousness binds Him more than His love and His grace do [18:23-25]. God has no obligation to be loving or to show grace, but He is held responsible to be righteous.

The record here is the record of Abraham's intercession. But it does not say that Abraham had finished his speaking; it says that the Lord had finished His speaking [v. 33]. Proper intercession is always God's speaking. Apparently we are speaking; actually God is speaking in our speaking. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 675-677, 680-683, 685, 687)

Further Reading: Life-study of Genesis, msgs. 50-51

<< WEEK 7 — DAY 6 >>

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 6:9-13 You then pray in this way: Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

In the example of prayer patterned by the Lord [in Matthew 6:9-13], the first three petitions imply the Trinity of the Godhead. “Your name be sanctified” is mainly related to the Father, “Your kingdom come” to the Son, and “Your will be done” to the Spirit. This is being fulfilled in this age, and it will be fulfilled in the coming kingdom age, when the name of God will be excellent in all the earth (Psa. 8:1), the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 11:15), and the will of God will be accomplished.

Following the rebellion of Satan (Ezek. 28:17; Isa. 14:13-15) [and]...the fall of man, Christ came to bring the heavenly rule to earth so that the earth might be recovered for God’s right, that the will of God might be done on earth as in heaven. This is the purpose of the new King establishing the kingdom of the heavens with His followers. The kingdom people must pray for this until the earth is fully recovered for God’s will in the coming kingdom age. (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 266-267)

Today’s Reading

This prayer [in Matthew 6] is all-inclusive. [It] first cares for God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will; then second, for our need. This reveals that in this fighting prayer the Lord will still take care of our needs. According to verse 11 we are to ask “today” for our “daily bread.” The King does not want His people to worry about tomorrow (v. 34); He only wants them to pray for their needs today. The term “daily bread” indicates living by faith. The kingdom people should not live on what they have stored; rather, by faith they should live on the Father’s daily supply.

Third, the patterned prayer cares for the kingdom people’s failures before God and their relationship with others [v. 12]. They should ask the Father to forgive their debts, their failures, and their trespasses, as they forgive their debtors to maintain peace. Verse 12 indicates that in this fighting prayer we must admit and confess that we have shortcomings, mistakes, and wrongdoings. We are in debt to others. Hence, we must ask the Father to forgive us as we forgive others for the Father’s sake.

As we pray to the Father, we must recognize our weakness...We should say, “Father, I fully realize that I am weak. Please do not bring me into trial.” (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 267-268)

The prayer to the Father concludes [with]...the realization and praise of God’s kingdom, power, and glory [Matt. 6:13]. This also refers to the Triune God. The kingdom is of the Son, which is the realm in which God exercises His power. The power is of the Spirit, which carries out God’s intention so that the Father can express His glory. This indicates that the prayer which the Lord teaches us to pray begins with the Triune God, in the sequence of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and ends also with the Triune God, but in the sequence of the Son, the Spirit, and the Father. Thus, the prayer taught by the Lord in His supreme teaching begins with God the Father and ends also with God the Father. God the Father is both the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega.

Such a critical prayer surely increases our seeking of the kingdom of the heavens as the Father’s heart’s desire and affords us our need of the divine supply of grace to fulfill all the supreme and strict requirements of the kingdom of the heavens for the Father’s good pleasure. On the one hand, we are seeking for something according to the Father’s heart’s desire. On the other hand, we have the supply to fulfill something for the Father’s good pleasure. (The God-man Living, p. 100)

Further Reading: Life-study of Matthew, msg. 21; The God-man Living, msgs. 10-11; CWWN, vol. 22, “The Prayer Ministry of the Church,” ch. 2

WEEK 7 — HYMN

How mysterious, O Lord

Prayer — Exercising the Spirit

782

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in a treble clef, common time (C), and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of two staves. The first staff contains the first line of the hymn, and the second staff contains the second line. Chord symbols are placed above the notes in the first staff and below the notes in the second staff. The lyrics are written below the notes.

1. How mys - te - ri - ous, O Lord, That Thy Spir - it dwells in mine;
O how mar - vel - ous it is, In - to one, two spir - its twine.

2. By the spirit I can walk,
Spiritual in spirit be;
By the spirit I can serve,
And in spirit worship Thee.
3. Thru Thy Word and by my prayer
In the spirit touching Thee,
Lifted high my spirit is,
Strengthened shall my spirit be.
4. Make my spirit strong I pray
Others' spirits to revive;
Lift my spirit high and free,
Others' spirits then may thrive.
5. Every time I speak, O Lord,
May my spirit actuate;
And whatever I may do,
Let my spirit motivate.
6. Every time my spirit acts
Others' spirits opened be,
Every time my spirit moves
Others' lifted unto Thee.
7. Lord, have mercy, from above
May Thy Spirit breathe on me;
Then my spirit will be rich,
Strengthened and refreshed by Thee.