

THE WILL OF GOD

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

Praying for God's Will to Be Done on Earth

MR Hymns: 783, 786

Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:1; 1 John 5:14-15; John 15:4-5, 7

- Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
- Luke 11:1 And while He was in a certain place praying, when He ceased, a certain one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples.
- 1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- 1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
- John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.
- John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.
- John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

I. Although God has a will for everything, He does not act independently; rather, He wants the human will on earth to echo His will before He does anything— Matt. 6:10; 1 John 5:14-15:

- Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
- 1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- 1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
- A. 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 be one with Him so that man may express and echo His will back to Him in prayer for the good pleasure of His will—Eph. 1:5, 11; Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 6:10; 7:21; 26:39; Phil. 2:13.
- Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
- Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
- Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, / O Daystar, son of the dawn! / How you have been hewn down to earth, / You who made nations fall prostrate!
- Isa 14:13 But you, you said in your heart: / I will ascend to heaven; / Above the stars of God / I will exalt my throne. / And I will sit upon the mount of assembly / In the uttermost parts of the north.
- Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; / I will make myself like the Most High.
- Isa 14:15 But you will be brought down to Sheol, / To the uttermost parts of the pit.
- Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
- Matt 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens.
- Matt 26:39 And going forward a little, He fell on His face and prayed, saying, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.
- Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
- B. God will not act independently, and He will not accomplish His will alone; instead, He will accomplish His will only when His people agree with Him and are one with Him—Col. 1:9; 4:12:
- Col 1:9 Therefore we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease praying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

1. If there is only a will in heaven, God will not move; the will in heaven is accomplished on earth only when we, His people, want the will in heaven to be done on earth—Matt. 6:10.
Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
2. Because God acts according to laws established by Him, He will not annul man's will on earth by His own will; He will not usurp man's will and act independently— Josh. 24:15, 22.
Josh 24:15 And if it seems wrong in your sight to serve Jehovah, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, either the gods from across the River, whom your fathers served, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.
Josh 24:22 Then Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen Jehovah on your own, to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses.
3. Everything related to God's move and work on earth can be accomplished only when there is a will on earth that cooperates with Him— John 7:17.
John 7:17 If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.
4. God cannot do what He wants by Himself; He does it only with the cooperation of the church; He accomplishes His will through the church.
5. Whenever God's people place their will in harmony with God's will, the will of God will be done on earth as in heaven—Matt. 6:10.
Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

II. God's intention is to accomplish His will through the believers' prayer in union with Him—v. 10; John 15:7:

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

John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

- A. God's people must pray before God will move on earth to accomplish His will.
- B. The prayer that is most pleasing to God is the prayer that asks for the accomplishment of His will—1 John 5:14.
1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- C. God wants us to work with Him to accomplish His will; the way to work together with Him is to pray—Luke 11:1; 18:1; 1 Thes. 5:17:
Luke 11:1 And while He was in a certain place praying, when He ceased, a certain one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples.
Luke 18:1 And He told them a parable to the end that they ought always to pray and not lose heart,
1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,
 1. The purpose of prayer is that we be one with God's will so that God can work on earth to fulfill His purpose—Rom. 8:26-29.
Rom 8:26 Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.
Rom 8:27 But He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God.
Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

2. If we do not work together with God in prayer for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, He cannot move on earth to accomplish His will—Matt. 6:10.
Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
 3. If we are one with the Lord, we want what God wants, and our will becomes one with God's will— John 15:7.
John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.
 4. The prayer for the accomplishment of God's will is not asking God to accomplish what we want Him to do but asking God what He Himself wants to do; such prayer is the outlet of God's will on earth—1 John 5:14-16.
1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
- D. Prayer for God's will to be done on earth consists of four steps—Matt. 6:10:
Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
1. God intends to do something according to His will—Eph. 1:5, 11.
Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of 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—1 John 5:14.
1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
 4. God accomplishes His work according to His will—v. 15.
1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
- E. God needs us to exercise our spirit with our resurrected will to pray according to His 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:
- Heb 10:5 Therefore, coming into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.
- Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not delight.
- Heb 10:7 Then I said, Behold, I have come (in the roll of the book it is written concerning Me) to do Your will, O God."
- Heb 10:8 Saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not desire nor delight in" (which are offered according to the law),
- Heb 10:9 He then has said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first that He may establish the second,
- Heb 10:10 By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
- Rom 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.
- Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
- Eph 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,
- Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

- Eph 1:6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved;
- Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,
- Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
- Eph 1:22b ... gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
- Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
- Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are
- Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
1. 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.
 - 1 Sam 2:35 And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in My heart and in My mind; and I will build him a sure house; and he will go before My anointed continually.
 - 1 Sam 3:21 And Jehovah continued to appear in Shiloh, for Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah.
 - 1 Sam 12:23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I would sin against Jehovah by ceasing to pray for you, but I will instruct you in the good and right way.
 2. 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.
 - Rom 8:26 Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.
 - Rom 8:27 But He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God.
 - Phil 4:6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
 - Col 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,
 - Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.
 - Mark 9:28 And when He entered into the house, His disciples questioned Him privately, Why were we not able to cast it out?
 - Mark 9:29 And He said to them, This kind cannot come out by any means except prayer.
 - Eph 6:10 Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.
 - Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,
 - Eph 6:12 For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies.
 - Eph 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

- Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness
- Eph 6:15 And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace;
- Eph 6:16 Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.
- Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
- Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
- Eph 6:19 And for me, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel,
- Eph 6:20 For which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I would speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

III. Effective prayers for God's will to be done on earth are the expression of God's desire and intention and are the issue of our abiding in the Lord and of His words abiding in us— John 15:4-5, 7:

- John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.
- John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.
- John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.
- A. Prayer is God's heart's desire passing through us and returning to God:
1. The desire in our prayers does not originate with us; it originates with God and is an expression of what God desires—Eph. 1:5, 11.

Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
 2. God's desire and intention are anointed into us through the Spirit and thus become our desire and intention, which we express to God in prayer—1 John 2:20, 27; 5:14-15.

1 John 2:20 And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
 3. Our prayer, therefore, is God's desire and intention coming out from God, passing through us, and going back to Him—vv. 14-15.

1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
- B. All prevailing prayers—prayers that can be counted effective before God—are the result of our abiding in the Lord and allowing His words to abide in us— John 15:4-5, 7:
- John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.
- John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.
- John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

1. When we abide in the Lord and His words abide in us, we touch God's feeling and understand His desire—v. 7.
John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.
2. After we touch God's feeling and understand His intention, we will spontaneously have His desire that comes out of His words in us—v. 7.
John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.
3. His desire will become our desire, what He wants will be what we want, and then we will pray according to this desire.
4. The Lord will answer this kind of prayer, and thus the will of God “will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth”—Matt. 6:10.
Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE EARTH CONTROLS HEAVEN

After we know God's will, we can say to Him, “God, we want You to do this. We are determined that You should do this. God, You must do this.” We can utter such strong and powerful prayers before God. We have to ask God to open our eyes to see the kind of work He is doing in this age. In this age all His work is based on this position. Heaven may want to accomplish something, but heaven will not do it alone; heaven waits for the earth to do it first, and then heaven does it. Although the earth stands in the second place, at the same time, it also stands in the first place. The earth must move before heaven will move. God wants the earth to move heaven.

HARMONY OF WILL

Some may ask why God would want the earth to control heaven. If we want to understand this, we have to remember that our God is limited by time. Time refers to the section between the two eternities. There is an eternity past and an eternity future. Between these two eternities, there is time. Within this section called time, God is limited. He cannot work as freely as He wants to. This is a limitation God encountered in the creation of man. According to Genesis 2, God gave man a free will when He created him. God has a will, and man has a will. Whenever man's will is not one with God's will, God is limited. In this room, there is a table, chair, floor, and ceiling. If a man comes in, he can do whatever he wants and not be restricted. The table, chair, floor, and ceiling will not be able to restrict him. God is a powerful God; He can do anything. If the earth was filled with spiritless material, God would be without restriction. But one day, God created man. The man He created was not like a piece of stone or wood; he was not a table or a chair, which could be placed here or there by God at will. The man that God created had a free will. Man could choose to obey God's word, and he also could choose to disobey His word. God did not create a man who was obligated to obey Him. He created a man with a free will, one who could obey or disobey His word. After God created a man with a free will, His power was limited by this man. He could no longer act according to what He wanted. He had to ask whether man wanted the same thing and whether he was willing to do the same thing. God cannot treat man like a stone, a piece of wood, a table, or a chair, because man has a free will. Since the day God created man, man could choose to allow God's authority to be carried out or to be blocked. This is why we say that within time, the period between the two eternities, God's authority is limited by man.

God is willing to be limited in time because He wants to gain a harmonious will in the second eternity. He wants man's free will to be harmonious with His will. This is a glory to God. If you put a book on the table, it remains on the table. If you put it on the shelf, it remains on the shelf. It is very obedient to you. But even though it is obedient, you are still not satisfied, because it does not have a free will; it is completely passive. God does not want the man He created to be like a book that can be

shuffled around at will. Even though God wants man to be fully submissive to Him, He also gave man a free will. God's intention is that man's free will would choose to obey Him. This is a glory to God! In eternity future the free will of man will be joined to God's eternal will. That will be the time for God's eternal will to be fulfilled and for man's free will to become harmonious with God's eternal will. Every man has a free will. In eternity future man will still have a free will, but it will stand on God's side. He will still have the ability to oppose God, but he will not oppose Him. Hallelujah! Even though man will have the freedom to oppose God, he will not oppose Him. He will do what God wants. This harmony of will is a glory to God!

In eternity future, although man's will is free, it will be in conformity to God's will, and there will be no will that is not subordinate to God's authority. However, in time, God is limited by man. Man does not do what God wants, or man does only a little of what God wants. God may want something to be big, yet man may want it to be small. Or God may want something to be small, yet man may want it to be big. God has no freedom at all! God's move is controlled by man in time. This speaking is in reference to the church. All of God's moves are limited by the church in time because the church represents man in eternity future. The church is standing on the earth today for God's will. If the church comes up to the standard of God's will, He will not be limited. But if it does not come up to the standard of His will, God will be limited. God is doing what He wants to do through the church. Today the church is taking the position that man will take in eternity. Then, even though man's will is free, it will stand completely on the side of God's eternal will. The church is taking that position ahead of time. Just as God will express Himself in eternity through the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, He also is expressing Himself today through the Body of Christ. Although the church has a free will, it submits this will to God's authority as if no other will existed. This allows God to do whatever He wants to do. When the church places its will under God's will today, He will move in the same way that He will in eternity; He will move as if no other will were opposing Him. This is a glory to God!

Now we can see the church's position before God. We cannot make the church so low by suggesting that it is merely a meeting. No, the church is a group of people who have been redeemed by the blood, who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, who have committed themselves to God's hand, and who are willing to take God's will, do His will, and stand for God on earth for the sake of maintaining His testimony.

We have to see that God works according to a law. Since there is free will on earth, God will not annul man by His own will. Brothers and sisters, do not think that this is a strange thing. This is a fact. God is in heaven. Yet all His works on earth can be accomplished only when there is a will on earth that agrees with and decides to do the works. He will not put aside man's will on earth. He will not usurp man's will on earth and act independently. Everything related to Him can be accomplished only when there is a will on earth that cooperates with Him. When the earth works, God works. When the earth decides, God acts. God must have man's will in harmony with His will. This harmony in will is a great glory to God!

THREE GREAT PRINCIPLES

We have said that God has a will for everything. Yet God does not act independently; He will not do anything by Himself. Even though God has a will, He wants the free will on earth to echo His will before He does anything. If there is only a will in heaven, God will not move. The heavenly move is accomplished on earth only when the earth wants the same thing as heaven. Today this is called the ministry of the church. Brothers and sisters, the ministry of the church is not only the preaching of the gospel. This does not mean that we should not preach the gospel; it means that the ministry of the church is not merely the preaching of the gospel. The ministry of the church is to bring the will in heaven to earth. How does the church bring the will in heaven to earth? It is by prayer on earth. Prayer is not as small and insignificant as some may think. It is not something that is dispensable. Prayer is a work. Prayer is the church saying to God, "God, we want Your will." Prayer is the church knowing

God's heart and opening its mouth to ask for what is in God's heart. If the church does not do this, it does not have much use on earth.

Many prayers for spiritual edification, prayers for fellowship, and prayers for supplication cannot replace prayers that are in the nature of work or ministry. If all your prayers are prayers for spiritual edification, fellowship, and supplication, they are too small. A prayer that is in the nature of work or ministry is one in which you stand on God's side, wanting what God wants. Brothers and sisters, if a prayer is uttered according to God's will, it is the most powerful thing. For the church to pray means that it finds out God's will and speaks out this will. Prayer is not just asking God for something. For the church to pray means that it stands on God's side to declare that man wants what God wants. If the church declares this, the declaration will be effectual.

Now let us consider three great principles in ministerial prayer from Matthew 18:18-20.

Speaking Out God's Will

In verse 18 the Lord said, "Whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Who is the "you" here? It is the church, because verse 17 mentions the church, and verse 18 is a continuation of verse 17. Whatever the church binds on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever the church looses on earth will be loosed in heaven. This is a very important principle: today God works through the church. God cannot do anything at will; He has to do everything through the church. Without going through the church, God cannot do anything. Brothers and sisters, this is a very sober principle. God cannot do anything by Himself today. There is a free will besides His will. If this will does not cooperate with Him, He cannot do anything. The amount of power that the church has expresses the amount of power that God has because His power is expressed through the church. God has placed Himself in the church. The height and extent that the church reaches is the height and extent that God's power reaches. If the power of the church is small and restricted, God cannot express the height or extensiveness of His power. The water department's reservoir may be great, but if you have only a small tap in your house, a great amount of water will not flow out. If you want more water in your house, you have to install a larger pipe. Today the capacity of the church determines the degree to which God's power is expressed. This can be seen from God's expression in Christ; the capacity of Christ is the degree of the manifestation of God. Today God is expressed in the church; the capacity of the church determines the degree of the expression of God and also the amount of knowledge one can have about God.

God wants to do many things on earth today. But He must have the church stand on His side before He can accomplish these things through the church. God cannot do what He wants to do by Himself; He has to do it with the cooperation of the church. The church is the means through which God expresses Himself. Let me repeat: the church is like a water tap. If the tap is small, the amount of water flowing through the tap will not be great, even if there is as much water as the Yangtze River. God truly wants to work in heaven, but He has to wait for the earth to move before He can work. There are many things that God wants to bind in heaven, and there are many things that God wants to loose in heaven. God wants to see many people, objects, and things contrary to Him bound, and He wants to see many spiritual, valuable, beneficial, and holy things that are of Him loosed. The question is whether or not there are men on earth to bind what God wants to bind and loose what God wants to loose. He wants the earth to control heaven. God wants the church to control heaven.

This by no means says that God is not omnipotent. God is indeed omnipotent, but He needs a channel on earth before He can manifest His omnipotence. We cannot increase God's power, but we can hinder His power. Man cannot increase God's power, but he can block His power. We cannot ask God to do what He does not want to do, but we can limit what He wants to do. We cannot ask God to do something that He is not willing to do, yet we can stop Him from doing something that He wants to do. Brothers and sisters, have you seen this? There is a power in the church that puts God's power under its control. It can allow God to do what He wants to do, and it can stop God from doing what He

wants to do. Our eyes have to be opened to see the future. One day God will expand the church to become the New Jerusalem. God's glory will be manifested from the church without any hindrance. Today He wants the church to first loose on earth before He looses in heaven. He wants the church to first bind on earth before He binds in heaven. Heaven will not take the initiative to work; it follows the earth's work. God will not take the initiative to work; He follows the church's work. Brothers and sisters, since this is the case, how great is the responsibility of the church!

We have seen that Matthew 18:15-17 speaks of a particular case and that the great principle is given in the following verses. When a brother sins against another, he may not confess his sins or mistakes. When the church reproves him, he still may not listen. If this happens, the church will consider him as the Gentile and the tax collector. The sinning brother may say, "Who are you? How can you make me as the Gentile and the tax collector? I will just stop coming to your meeting. If I cannot come to this place, there are many other places I can go to." However, what did the Lord Jesus say after this? "Truly I say to you, Whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Hence, if the church decides to consider a man a Gentile, God in heaven will consider him a Gentile also. If the church considers a man a tax collector, God in heaven will consider him a tax collector also. In other words, God will do in heaven what the church does on earth. If the church considers a brother a Gentile and a tax collector, God in heaven will consider the same brother a Gentile and a tax collector. Not only does this case follow the principle, a thousand other matters follow the same principle. This case is only an example. It shows us how much the church can do. Then it shows us the greatness of the principle.

The church is God's chosen vessel. God has placed His will in this vessel so that it will declare God's will on earth. When the earth wants something, heaven also wants it. When the church wants something, God also wants it. Hence, if God's demand is rejected in the church, God will not be able to accomplish what He wants to accomplish in heaven.

Many brothers and sisters are bearing a burden day and night. They are bearing the burden because they have not prayed. Once the tap is turned on, water flows out. Once it is turned off, the water is blocked. Is the water pressure strong when water is released or when it is blocked? We all know that when water is released, the pressure decreases. When water is blocked, the pressure increases. When the church prays, it is like turning on the tap; the more the tap is turned, the less the pressure becomes. If the church does not pray, it is like a tap being turned off with pressure building up. When God wants to accomplish something, He puts a burden in a brother, sister, or the whole church. If the church prays and fulfills its duty, it will feel relieved. The more the church prays, the more relieved it will feel. As it prays once, twice, five times, ten times, or twenty times, it feels more and more relieved. If the church does not pray, it will feel stuffed and burdened. If the church continues to not pray, it will suffocate to death. Brothers and sisters, if you feel heavy and pressed within, you have not fulfilled your ministry before God; God's pressure is upon you. Try to pray for half an hour or an hour; the pressure will be released, and you will feel relieved.

What then is the prayer ministry of the church? It is God telling the church what He wants to do and the church praying on earth what God wants to do. This prayer is not asking God to accomplish what we want Him to do but asking God to accomplish what He Himself wants to do. Brothers and sisters, the church's responsibility is to declare God's will on earth. On earth the church declares for God, "This is what I want." If the church fails in this matter, it will not be of much use in God's hand. Even if everything else is good, it will not be of much use if it fails in this matter. The greatest use of the church lies in the fact that it stands for God's will to be done on earth. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 22, "The Prayer Ministry of the Church," pp. 138-147)