

Week Four

Prayer to Absorb God and to Express God by Praying to God as a Friend So That We Can Co-work with God

Hymns:

Scripture Reading: Psa. 27:4; Jer. 17:7-8; Matt. 6:6; Col. 2:6-7, 19; Isa. 37:31; Gen. 18:1-22

Outline

§Day 1

- I. **The meaning of prayer is to absorb God; the more we contact God, the more we will absorb Him, and the more we absorb Him, the more we will enjoy Him as our light and our salvation:**
 - A. **In Psalm 27:1 David says, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation"; God's being our light and our salvation shows that God Himself is what we need; what God gives us is just Himself; light is God, salvation is God, power is God (1 Cor. 1:24), and grace is God (John 1:16-17; 1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Cor. 15:10; cf. Gal. 2:20); every spiritual need that we have is God Himself.**
 - B. **David contacted and absorbed God by beholding Him as beauty (Psa. 27:4); when he contacted God to absorb God, he was enlightened and received salvation within:**
 1. **Beholding God as our beauty is a great key and a great secret to experiencing God for His heart's desire—2 Cor. 3:16-18.**
 2. **By the divine dispensing through the washing of the water of life in the word of Christ, He beautifies us as the house of His beauty to be His beautiful bride for His beautification—Isa. 60:7, 9, 13, 19, 21; 59:21; Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 19:7.**

- C. **There is a hymn that says, "Just as I am" (Hymns, #1048); this means that we should come to God just as we are without trying to improve or change our condition; we received Christ in this way, and we should walk in Christ in this way—Col. 2:6-7a.**
- D. **To pray is to come to the Lord just as we are; when we come to the Lord, we should lay our inner condition before Him and tell Him that we are short in every matter; even if we are weak, confused, sad, and speechless, we can still come to God; no matter what our inner condition is, we should bring it to God.**
- E. **Instead of caring about our condition, we need to enter into God's presence to contact Him by looking to Him, beholding Him, praising Him, giving thanks to Him, worshipping Him, and absorbing Him; then we will enjoy God's riches, taste His sweetness, receive Him as light and power, and be inwardly peaceful, bright, strong, and empowered; we will then learn the lesson of staying connected to Him when we are ministering the word to the saints—1 Pet. 4:10-11; 2 Cor. 2:17; 13:3.**

§Day 2

- II. **Colossians 2:6-7 reveals that Christ as the good land is the rich soil in which we have been rooted so that we may grow with the elements that we absorb from the soil—cf. 1 Cor. 3:6, 9; Col. 2:19:**
 - A. **By working together with God, Paul planted the believers as the living plants into Christ as the soil; God put us, the living plants, into Christ as the soil (1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 6:4-5) so that we may grow in Christ as life (Eph. 4:15-16) and be transformed in life to become precious materials for God's building (1 Cor. 3:12).**
 - B. **According to God's economy, the one who trusts in the Lord is like a tree planted by water, signifying God as the fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:13; 17:7-8); a tree grows beside a river by absorbing all the riches of the water; this is a picture of God's economy, which is carried out by His divine dispensing (cf. Isa.**

57:20-21 with footnote 1 on v. 20; 55:7; 12:1-6; John 4:10, 14; 7:37-38; 1 Cor. 12:13).

- C. In order to receive the divine dispensing, we as the trees must absorb God as the water (cf. 3:6); the riches of the supplying God dispensed into us as the trees constitute us with God's divinity and cause us to grow with the growth of God (Col. 2:19); in this way we and God become one, having the same element, essence, constitution, and appearance (Rev. 4:3; 21:11).**
- D. If a plant does not absorb nutrients from the soil, the plant cannot grow; likewise, if we do not receive what comes out of Christ as the Head, the Body cannot grow; holding the Head is, therefore, equal to being rooted in Christ as the soil; to hold the Head is to remain in Christ, staying intimately connected to Him without any insulation between us and Him—Col. 2:19.**
- E. The growth of the Body depends on the growth of God, the addition of God, the increase of God, within us; God's building is "growing into a holy temple in the Lord" in whom we also "are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit" by our absorbing the riches of Christ; the actual building of the house of God is by the believers' growth in life—Eph. 2:21-22.**
- F. Individual growth becomes corporate growth; if all the members grow individually, the Body will be built up corporately—Hymns, #395 and #840.**
- G. Colossians 2:7 puts being rooted and being built up together; this is because being rooted is for growing, and growing is genuine building (Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 3:6, 9); the only way to become deeply rooted in Christ is to contact Him as the soil in order to daily absorb the water in the word (Eph. 5:26); in this way we "take root downward and bear fruit upward" (Isa. 37:31).**
- H. We need to take time to absorb Christ day by day by having a personal and private time with Him (Matt. 6:6; 14:22-23; Mark 1:35) so that spontaneously we will walk in Christ and live out**

Christ for the corporate expression of Christ (Col. 2:6-7):

1. Our daily need is to allow adequate time for prayer, which will enable us to absorb more of the riches of our God; in the morning many saints may spend time with the Lord, but they may not absorb much of His riches because they are in too much of a hurry; we cannot absorb the riches of Christ into us as our nourishment if we are in a hurry—cf. Psa. 119:48, 97.
2. We must spend more personal and private time with the Lord in order to absorb Him; we must exercise our spirit to spend more time in our spirit to adore the Lord, to praise Him, to offer thanks to Him, and to speak to Him freely; then God will give us the growth as we enjoy Him as our banquet—Matt. 22:4; Rev. 3:20.
3. The addition of God into us by receiving Him as our new nourishment and fresh enjoyment through His words of spirit, life, gladness, and joy (John 6:57, 63; Jer. 15:16) is the growth that He gives (Josh. 1:8-9; Psa. 119:15, 48).
4. If we spend a considerable amount of personal and private time with the Lord daily in order to absorb God, the salvation of His countenance will become the salvation of our countenance—42:5, 11.

§Day 3

III. The meaning of prayer is also for us to express God; in Psalm 27:4 David says that he desired not only to behold the beauty of Jehovah but also "to inquire in His temple"; to inquire is to let God speak within us so that the words spoken to Him in prayer are actually God's speaking within us, God's expressions:

- A. Real prayer is our coming to God, letting God speak within us, and expressing to God what He has spoken back to Him—"When You say, Seek My face, / To You my heart says, Your face, O Jehovah, will I seek" (v. 8).
- B. John 15:7 says, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you"; this verse presents three crucial points:

1. First, we must abide in the Lord, which is to remain in fellowship with the Lord.
 2. Second, the Lord's words must abide in us; when we abide in the Lord and are in constant fellowship with Him, He speaks within us.
 3. Third, our asking the Lord comes from the Lord's speaking within us; if we are in fellowship with the Lord, He will speak within us, and then we will have the words with which to ask Him, that is, to pray to Him.
- C. When we really touch, contact, and absorb God, He will speak within us; then we pray according to His inner speaking; to pray is to go to God, meet Him, draw near to Him, commune with Him, and absorb Him so that He can speak to us inwardly; when we pray to Him with His words to us, our prayer expresses God.**

§Day 4

- D. In our contact with the Lord, we need to learn the following principles:**
1. We should not direct the Lord in our prayer (cf. 2:4); instead, like Saul of Tarsus, we should ask, "What shall I do, Lord?" not "This is what I will do, Lord" (Acts 22:10).
 2. When we draw near to the Lord and contact Him, He causes us to see our needs and points out our problems, faults, stains, and sins; the way for us to take the living water is to confess these sins to the Lord—John 4:15-18.
 3. When we draw near to the Lord to contact Him, we should seek the Lord Himself as the unseen spiritual matters, not the seen physical matters—6:27, 31-33; 2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 11:27.

§Day 5

4. Human opinions frustrate the Lord's power, so not until we are hopelessly weak, an utter failure, and completely dead, will the Lord manifest Himself in us and to us as resurrection power—John 11:3, 5-6, 17, 21, 25-26, 32-35, 38, 41-44; 2 Cor. 1:8-9.
5. When we draw near to the Lord, we need to let Him do what He wills in us—John 13:6-9; Luke 1:37-38.

6. Even when we are cold and indifferent toward the Lord or have fallen into the world, He will manifest Himself to us; we may fail and change, but the Lord never fails or changes—John 21:1-25; Isa. 49:15-16; Jer. 31:3.

§Day 6

- E. Inquiring prayers honor God; David knew how to pray because he often inquired of Jehovah (1 Sam. 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2 Sam. 2:1; 5:19, 23); after God spoke to David through Nathan the prophet, David "sat before Jehovah" (7:18) and told the Lord, "Do as You have spoken" (v. 25b); he then told the Lord that because of His speaking, "Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You" (v. 27).**
- IV. The best prayer is to pray to God as a friend; Abraham was the friend of God; in Genesis 18 the God of heaven humbled Himself in order to befriend Abraham:**
- A. After he was circumcised and his natural strength was terminated, Abraham lived in intimate fellowship with God and became God's friend—13:3-4, 18; 17:1-16; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23.**
- B. 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.**
- C. Even before the incarnation (John 1:14) Jehovah as Christ appeared to Abraham in a human form, with a human body, and communed with him on a human level (Gen. 13:18; 18:1-22); as Abraham was enjoying sweet fellowship with God, he received a revelation from Him regarding the birth of Isaac and the destruction of Sodom.**
- D. The birth of Isaac is related to the coming of Christ as grace, and the destruction of Sodom is related to God's judgment upon sin; this means that Christ must come in and sin must go out.**
- E. God revealed to Abraham His intention to destroy Sodom,**

because He was seeking an intercessor to intercede for Lot (vv. 16-22; 19:1; cf. Heb. 7:25; Isa. 59:16; Ezek. 22:30); God wanted to save Lot in order to protect Christ's genealogy through Ruth, a Moabitess and a descendant of Lot (Gen. 19:37; Ruth 1:4; Matt. 1:5).

- F. Thus, in God's intimate fellowship with Abraham, in a mysterious way, without mentioning Lot's name, God revealed His heart's desire; 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—Gen. 18:17, 20-23; 19:27-29; Psa. 27:4-8; Heb. 4:16; 7:25; James 5:17.
- G. 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.
- H. 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; God's righteousness binds Him much more than His love and grace do—18:23-25; Rom. 1:17.
- I. 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—Gen. 18:25-32.
- J. Abraham's intercession did not terminate with Abraham's speaking but with God's, showing that genuine intercession is God's speaking in our speaking—v. 33; John 15:7; Rom. 8:26-27.
- K. In our intimate fellowship with God, we receive the revelation that all the impossibilities become possibilities with Christ—Gen. 18:10-15; 21:1-8; Luke 18:27.
- V. **During the first aspect of our prayer, we enter into fellowship with God, who then anoints us with His burden for the work and reveals His intention to us; the second aspect of our prayer is then to inquire of the Lord by petitioning Him concerning His will and His burden for the work; then we**

carry out the purpose of prayer by coordinating with God to co-work with God—Isa. 62:6-7; 45:11; Ezek. 22:30; Dan. 9:2-4; 1 Sam. 12:23; 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1a.

WEEK 4—DAY 1

Morning Nourishment

Psa. 27:1 Jehovah is my light and my salvation;...Jehovah is the strength of my life...

4 One thing I have asked from Jehovah; that do I seek: to dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire in His temple.

To pray is to contact God and to absorb Him in that contact. Thus, the importance of prayer does not depend on how much we say to God or on how much we cry out to Him but on how much we contact Him. The more we contact God, the more we will absorb Him, and the more we absorb Him, the more we will enjoy God and salvation.

Let me say a word here to clear up our inaccurate concepts concerning God and His salvation. Psalm 27:1 says, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation." This verse does not say that God shines on us but that He is our light, nor does it say that God saves us but that He is our salvation.... By shining on us and saving us, God is accomplishing something for us. But by being our light and our salvation, God Himself is what we need. When we have God, we have light and salvation. Without God we have neither light nor salvation. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," p. 223)

Today's Reading

Electricity is the electric light in a lamp, the electric heat in an iron, and the electric power in a fan. Electricity is light to meet one need, heat to meet another need, and power to meet yet another need. Similarly, light is God, salvation is God, power is God, and grace is God. Every spiritual need that we have is God Himself. God has not given us anything besides Himself. Hence, if we lose God, we lose everything; that is, we have nothing.

Those who knew God in the Old Testament age experienced Him in this way, and those in the New Testament age also experience God in this

way. David received revelation from his experience to see that God was his light and his salvation [Psa. 27:1].... David was eager to contact and absorb God daily and hourly. David contacted and absorbed God by beholding Him. When he contacted God, he was enlightened within, and when he absorbed God, he received salvation within. David obtained God as his light and salvation by beholding God. This is a great key and a great secret to experiencing God.

God is Spirit; hence, our contacting and absorbing Him do not depend on our words....We may not say anything when we come to God, but our whole being, including our heart, should face God. While we look to God, we may sigh and confess that we are incompetent, weak, unable to rise, unpresentable, and thirsty and that we lack words for the gospel and are not inclined to fellowship with the saints. We should lay our inner condition before God and even tell Him that we are short in every matter. No matter what our inner condition is, we should bring it to God. There is a hymn that says, "Just as I am" (Hymns, #1048). This means that we should come to God just as we are without trying to improve or change our condition.

Many believers have the natural concept that before they can pray and draw near to God, they must wait until their condition improves or until their inner feeling is strong. This concept is not according to the meaning of prayer. To pray is to come to God just as we are....We do not need to wait for anything, change anything, or prepare anything. Even if we are weak, confused, sad, and speechless, we can still come to God.

When we pray, we should behold His glorious face and linger in His presence to worship, praise, give thanks to Him, and muse upon Him. We should think of His works and His person and not look at our condition or our environment. By looking to God, waiting on Him, and musing upon Him, we can absorb Him into us. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," pp. 223-225, 227)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," chs. 1-4

WEEK 4—DAY 2

Morning Nourishment

Col. 2:7 Having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

In the book of Colossians there are implications that believers are to grow like plants rooted in the soil [cf. 2:7]....This implies that, in God's eyes, we are plants. To grow in life is to grow with the growth of God. It is to grow with the increase of God. True growth is the increase of God, the addition of God. In Himself, God does not need to grow. He is eternal, perfect, and complete. However, there is the need for God to grow in us. How much of the Triune God do you have within you? Do you not need more of the increase, the addition, of God within you? We all need the increase of God. We need to grow with the growth of God; that is, we need God to increase, to grow, in us. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 378, 380)

Today's Reading

In Colossians 2:19..."holding the Head" is equal to abiding in Christ. Of course, to hold the Head implies that we are not detached, or severed, from Him. At the time Paul wrote to the Colossians, they had been somewhat detached from Christ by their culture. Culture can be a form of insulation, which keeps us from Christ. To hold the Head is to remain in Christ without any insulation between us and Him.

The words out from whom in verse 19 indicate that something is coming out from the Head to cause the Body to grow. The growth of the Body depends on what comes out of Christ as the Head, just as the growth of a plant depends on what comes into the plant from the soil. If a plant does not absorb nutrients from the soil, the plant cannot grow. Likewise, if

we do not receive what comes out from Christ as the Head, the Body cannot grow. Holding the Head is, therefore, equal to being rooted in Christ as the soil.

Our need is to take time to absorb God. As we daily take time to eat food, we should daily take time to absorb the Lord, take time to assimilate the riches of Christ. Our contact with the Lord should not be rushed....We need to allow adequate time for prayer. This will enable us to absorb more of the riches of our God. He is real, rich, and substantial, and we need to absorb Him. Our God today is the processed, all-inclusive Spirit, and we have a spirit with which to absorb Him. Thus, we must exercise our spirit to stay in His presence to absorb Him. This takes time. Although we all have experienced absorbing the riches of God, our experience is not yet adequate. For this reason, we must spend more time to absorb Him. Do not spend so much time in your mind, emotion, and will, but spend more time in your spirit to adore the Lord, to praise Him, to offer thanks to Him, and to speak to Him freely. As you fellowship with Him in this way, you will absorb His riches, and He will add more of Himself into you. The more God is added into us, the more growth He gives to us. This is the way God gives the growth. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 453, 456-457)

If we would spend some time to pray every day in order to absorb God, the salvation of His countenance will become the salvation of our countenance (Psa. 42:5, 11). Perhaps a sister is very sorrowful and can only sigh in grief and sorrow during the twenty minutes that she spends in God's presence. However, after twenty minutes her countenance will change, and she will become joyful. Our countenance manifests the salvation that comes forth from God's countenance. Because we spend time face to face with God, the salvation of His countenance becomes the salvation of our countenance. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," p. 227)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msgs. 44, 52-53, 56-57

WEEK 4—DAY 3

Morning Nourishment

Psa. 27:8 When You say, Seek My face, to You my heart says, Your face, O Jehovah, will I seek.

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.

The first meaning of prayer is to absorb God, and the second meaning is to express God. These meanings are related. To express God means to let Him speak, that is, to let God be expressed. Prayer is not our speaking or expressing ourselves. Prayer is our letting God speak and express Himself.

In the New Testament Martha had much to say. When Martha's brother, Lazarus, died and the Lord came, Martha did not let the Lord speak first. As soon as she saw the Lord, she said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). The Lord said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live.... Do you believe this?" (vv. 25-26). Martha replied, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God" (v. 27). What Martha said did not correspond with what the Lord revealed to her. Because she kept speaking, the Lord's words could not get into her.... Real prayer is our coming to God and letting God speak and express Himself instead of speaking our own words and expressing ourselves. We are often like Martha in our prayer. Our only care is to express ourselves, not to let God express Himself. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," pp. 227-228)

Today's Reading

We should speak when we pray; however, the question is, What do we say? In our prayer we should say what God is saying within us. God speaks within us, and to pray is to repeat what He has spoken back to Him. This is the principle of Psalm 27:8.... Such prayer is according to God's speaking

within us. Therefore, the words we utter in prayer are an expression of the speaking within us. Without is man's speaking, but within is God's speaking. Once God speaks within, we speak without. Prayer is not our asking for something through speaking; it is our expressing what God has spoken within us. Hence, our prayer becomes God's expression. This is real prayer.

For example, we hear that the church needs to pray for a certain special meeting or for the revival of the church. Just as we begin to pray, we sense a word from the Lord telling us something concerning our inner condition and our situation. We should stop praying and forget about the revival of the church or the special meeting and follow the inner sense; we should speak the words that the Lord has spoken. If we sense the Lord's rebuke, saying, "You are full of the flesh," we should say, "Lord, I am full of the flesh." If we sense that the Lord is saying, "You are full of the self," we should immediately say, "Lord, I am full of the self." In Psalm 27:4 David said that he desired to behold the beauty of Jehovah and "inquire in His temple." David did not say "cry out" or "beseech" but "inquire." To inquire is to ask God.

To pray means to absorb God and to express Him. Every prayer should touch God and let Him pass through us and be expressed. When we pray in this way, we will be anointed by God and be mingled more with Him. Then we will know that God is our everything. We will also see that He is always with us and is our supply in every need.

John 15:7...presents three crucial points. First, we must abide in the Lord. To abide in the Lord is to have fellowship with the Lord. Second, the Lord's words must abide in us. When we abide in the Lord and are in constant fellowship with Him, He speaks within us. Third, we ask the Lord according to our heart's desire. Such asking, or praying, comes from the Lord's speaking within us. If we are in fellowship with the Lord, He will speak within us. When the Lord speaks, we have the words with which to ask Him, that is, to pray to Him. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," pp. 228-231)

Further Reading: Life-study of Ephesians, msg. 95; Come Forward to the Throne of Grace (booklet)

WEEK 4—DAY 4

Morning Nourishment

Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do.

John 6:27 Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you...

After we are saved, the most important thing is for us to contact God.... If we do not know how to contact God and lack fellowship with Him, we cannot be proper Christians, no matter how much we try.

There are many cases in the Gospel of John that show how we should contact the Lord.... If we truly want to contact the Lord, we need to see some principles in contacting Him in these cases. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," pp. 251-252)

Today's Reading

In the first case the Lord changed water into wine....The major principle in the first case is that we must not direct the Lord when we contact Him. All authority must be in His hands. Hence, both the timing and the way we do things must be determined and directed by Him, not by us. We cannot say, "Lord, do this," or "Lord, do that." If we say this, the Lord might say, "What do I have in this that concerns you?" (John 2:4).... This does not mean that the Lord does not want any contact with us or that He is not bearing responsibility for our matters. The Lord entered into us in order to contact us and to be responsible for our affairs, just as He was at the wedding in Cana.

The Samaritan woman's contact with the Lord in chapter 4 illustrates a second principle. Here the Samaritan woman realized that she was thirsty and that the Lord had living water. Hence, she asked the Lord for living water. However, the Lord did not give her this living water immediately;

instead, He asked her a question.... By asking about her husband [vv. 15-16], the Lord touched her sinful life; her sins were related to her husband....The Lord seemed to say, “Do you want living water? You should hand your sins over. Do you want to be satisfied? You should give heed to your sins.”

Knowing that the Lord can supply our need, we...go to the Lord and discover a need. When we see a need, we ask the Lord to meet that need. However, while we are asking, the Lord shows us our stains, faults, and failures; that is, He shows us matters that need to be dealt with. We need to confess the things that He points out, the “husband” He asks us to bring, so that we can receive His supply.

A third principle is seen in the case of the feeding of the five thousand in chapter 6. A great crowd contacted the Lord, and He performed a miracle in order to feed them. When the crowd returned the next day to be filled, the Lord said, “Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life” (v. 27). The Lord was teaching the crowd to seek the food that abides unto eternal life instead of physical food. This is another principle: the Lord does not want us to seek or to put our hope in physical things when we contact Him in prayer.

Some brothers spend half an hour in the morning praying for physical things. Likewise, some sisters pray for the physical affairs of their spouse and children. The Lord may initially feed and care for those who draw near to Him in prayer in this way, but the Lord will eventually regard such a person as one who comes only to eat and be filled....The Lord does not want us to always mention physical things when we contact Him; He already knows about these things. When we contact Him, we should focus on spiritual things, the things of life. This is to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. If we would focus on these things, the Lord will add the physical things to us (Matt. 6:31-33). (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, “The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer,” pp. 252, 254-256)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, “Knowing Life and the Church,” ch. 16

WEEK 4—DAY 5

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 1:8-9 ...We were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living. Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

Isa. 49:15 Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she would not have compassion on the son of her womb? Even though they may forget, yet I will not forget you.

John 11 presents another principle: the Lord does not heal man; He resurrects man. Healing involves helping man's weaknesses.... Instead of immediately healing Lazarus, the Lord waited for Lazarus to die in order to raise him, because the Lord only wants to raise man. Resurrection involves waiting until man comes to an end in order to give him a new beginning....The Lord must wait until we are hopelessly weak, until we are an utter failure, and until we are completely dead before He can manifest His resurrection power in us.

Thus, we should let go of our weaknesses and failures when we draw near to the Lord. The Lord already knows our weaknesses and failures.... If He allows us to be defeated, even our imploring Him will not make us strong. Hence, we need to learn the lesson of dropping our problems when we pray. When we are truly hopeless and at an end, the Lord will come. This is resurrection, and this is salvation. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," p. 260)

Today's Reading

In John 13 the Lord washed His disciples' feet. The principle involved in this case is that we need to let Him do what He wills in us when we draw near to Him. We should not be like Peter, who humbly said, "You shall by no means wash my feet forever." Then, when the Lord said, "Unless I wash you,

you have no part with Me,” Peter said, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head” (vv. 8-9). This is our condition. The Lord wants to work in us, but we initially will not let Him. Later, when we are willing, we want Him to do more than He intends. These are our human opinions.

In chapter 21 the Lord manifested Himself to His disciples. This case shows that the Lord will draw near to us even when we fall into the world, that is, when we are at our weakest point and forget to draw near to Him.

Peter... had not only gone back to the world but also had taken other disciples with him. After he had said, “I am going fishing,” some of the disciples said, “We also are coming with you” (v. 3). This can be compared to a brother saying, “I am going to love the world,” and other brothers saying, “We also are coming with you.” The disciples went as a group to love the world; they fell into the world together. The Lord, however, did not abandon them. He continued to look after them. He let them catch fish, and He also fed them with fish and bread that He had prepared. After they ate, the Lord asked Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” (v. 15). With these words the Lord let His disciples know that He was not disappointed in them; He wanted them to continue to follow Him and to serve Him.

Concerning contacting the Lord, we are all failures. Peter went fishing, and we also “go fishing” like him. We fail, but the Lord never fails. When we draw near to Him, He contacts us, and even when we do not draw near to Him, He still comes to contact us. We are unreliable. We may contact the Lord today but not tomorrow, or we may contact Him this month but not next month. No matter what our condition is, the Lord remains the same. No matter how we change, the Lord never changes. Hence, in our contacting the Lord, we must realize that the Lord never changes, no matter how much we may change. This is a principle. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, “The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer,” pp. 260-262)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1961-1962, vol. 3, “Fellowshipping with the Lord for the Mingling of God with Man,” ch. 1

WEEK 4—DAY 6

Morning Nourishment

James 2:23 ..."Abraham believed God..."; and he was called the friend of God.
Gen. 18:14 Is anything too marvelous for Jehovah? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.
17 And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?

When we pray by inquiring, we do not make our desire known to God; instead, God's desire is made known to us. When the responsible brother senses God's purpose concerning the young saints, he should inquire further, "Lord, do You want me to fellowship with them?" This is the anointing within him. It seems as if it is the brother who is inquiring, but it is God who is working in him....Good prayers are inquiring prayers because they honor God.

David knew how to pray. He often inquired of Jehovah (1 Sam. 30:8; 2 Sam. 5:19, 23; Psa. 27:4). The best prayer is to inquire of the Lord step by step, according to the sense within. By inquiring in this way, we can easily receive God's leading, and we can work according to the leading. (CWWL, 1961-1962, vol. 3, "Fellowshipping with the Lord for the Mingling of God with Man," p. 344)

Today's Reading

In Genesis 18 God wanted Abraham to pray to Him, so He came to be Abraham's friend. God did not lift Abraham up to the heavenly sanctuary of glory; instead, He humbled Himself and went to the lowly tent in which Abraham dwelt. God did not flaunt His prestige, majesty, or power....God came to Abraham as an ordinary visitor....This situation was altogether like that of a person visiting in a friend's home. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 3, "The Meaning and Purpose of Prayer," p. 232)

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....Christ must come in and sin must go out.... [God] intends to produce Christ and to destroy the "Sodom" in our home life, work life, and even in our Christian and church life.... Positively we see more of Christ and say, "I have seen something new of Christ. How I hate that I have not lived more by Him." This is the revelation regarding the birth of Isaac, the revelation that Christ will be brought forth in your life. But negatively we see our sins and say, "O Lord, forgive me. There is still so much selfishness, hatred, and jealousy in me. I have so many failures, shortcomings, and even sinful things. Lord, I judge these things and want them destroyed."

In Genesis 18:14 the Lord said, "Is anything too marvelous [or, wonderful] for Jehovah?"... Every experience of Christ is marvelous in our eyes; it is a wonderful doing of the Lord. How could Sarah have brought forth Isaac? It was humanly impossible. If that had happened to us, it would have been a wonderful and marvelous thing in our eyes. Christian experiences are always like this because the Christian life is a life of impossibilities. How marvelous it is that all the impossibilities become possibilities with Christ! We can do what other people cannot do and we can be what others cannot be because Christ is marvelous and wonderful in our experience of Him.

God came to Abraham because He was seeking an intercessor. On His throne in heaven, God had decided to execute His judgment on the wicked city of Sodom. But God would never forget that one of His people, Lot, was in that city. Lot did not even realize that he had to be rescued from Sodom. What could God do? He had to find someone to intercede for Lot....God came to Abraham for the purpose of finding an intercessor.... God has His divine principles. One of them is that without intercession He cannot save anyone. The salvation of every Christian has been accomplished through intercession. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 673, 675, 678)

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

<< **WEEK 4 — HYMN** >>

Hymns, #784 Pray to fellowship with Jesus

Prayer — Fellowship with the Lord

- 1 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
In the spirit seek His face;
Ask and listen in His presence,
Waiting in the secret place.
(Chorus) Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
In the spirit seek His face;
Ask and listen in His presence,
Waiting in the secret place.
- 2 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
Fully opened from within,
With thy face unveiled, beholding,
Single, pure, and genuine.
- 3 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
Seeking Him in confidence;
Learn to touch Him as the Spirit,
Looking up in reverence.
- 4 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
Speaking nothing in pretense;
Ask according to the spirit,
Praying by the inner sense.
- 5 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
List'ning earnestly to Him;
Be impressed with His intentions,
Yielding to Him from within.
- 6 Pray to fellowship with Jesus,
Bathing in His countenance;
Saturated with His beauty,
Radiate His excellence.

