

SERVICE FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

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

- 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 displeasing 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.

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.

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.

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.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THE CHURCH’S RESPONSIBILITY

Of the twelve aspects of the church covered in Ephesians, the main aspects are the new man, the bride, and the warrior. The new man includes the aspect of the Body, and the Body includes the fullness and the dwelling place. Therefore, the first ten aspects of the church are all included in the new man who fulfills God’s eternal purpose and carries out His economy. This new man is used by the Triune God to accomplish what He planned in eternity past for eternity future. Nevertheless, although God’s plan is fulfilled with the new man, Christ’s desire still needs to be satisfied, and God’s enemy still must be defeated. Hence, there is the need for the church to be both the bride and the warrior.

The passage from 1:1 to 6:9 completes the revelation on the positive side concerning the church for the fulfilling of God’s eternal purpose. Yet on the negative side, that is, for dealing with God’s enemy, something still remains to be covered. In the first five chapters the church is portrayed in many ways, on the positive side, to fulfill God’s eternal purpose. On the negative side, the church is seen in chapter 6 as

a warrior to defeat God's enemy, the devil. To do this, the church must put on the whole armor of God.

In 1928 Brother Nee held his first overcomer conference on spiritual warfare. In that conference Satan, the evil one, was exposed to the uttermost. Brother Nee pointed out that 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.

All warfare has its source in this conflict of wills. Before the satanic will rose up to contradict the divine will, there was no war in the universe. The controversy in the universe began with the rebellion of the archangel against God. That rebellion was the beginning of all the fighting that is now taking place among nations, in society, in the family, and in individuals. Throughout history there have been wars between nations, groups, persons, and even within individuals. For example, you may experience an inner warfare between your reason and your lust. All the different kinds of warfare have their source in the controversy between the divine will and the satanic will.

We do not know how much time elapsed between the rebellion of Satan and the creation of Adam. We simply know that at a particular time, God created man and endowed him with a human will that was free. It is because of God's greatness that He gave man a free will. A great person will never compel anyone to follow him. By giving man a free will, God was indicating that He would not force man to obey Him. When I was young, I thought that God was not wise in creating man with a free will. If I had been God, I would have made it impossible for man to have had a choice. I would have created man in such a way that all he could do was follow God. But in His greatness God gave man freedom of choice.

In Genesis 2 we see that man was free to exercise his will to eat either of the tree of life or of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These two trees represent the divine will and the satanic will, respectively. Hence, in the garden there was a triangular situation, with the tree of life representing the divine will, the tree of knowledge representing the satanic will, and Adam representing the human will. Actually, the tree of life denotes God Himself, and the tree of knowledge denotes Satan. Therefore, there were three persons—God, Satan, and man—each one with a will.

Although there were three wills, the controversy involved just two parties—God and Satan. The crucial issue was whether man would choose the divine will or the satanic will. If the human will stood with the divine will, then God's will would be accomplished. But if the human will took sides with the satanic will, Satan's will

would be carried out, at least temporarily. As we all know, the human will took sides with the satanic will. This means that man chose to follow Satan and sided with the satanic will. Therefore, Satan was victorious temporarily.

However, through repentance man can turn from the satanic will to the divine will, from Satan's side to God's side. The first commandment in the gospel is to repent. The next two commandments are to believe and to be baptized. Any sinner who desires to be saved must obey these three commandments. He must repent to God, believe in the Lord Jesus, and be baptized in water. To repent is to have a turn from the satanic will to the divine will. Since birth our will has stood on the side of the satanic will. The reason for this is that we were in Adam when he chose Satan's will above God's will.

Many Christians do not know the true significance of the preaching of the gospel. The Bible says that we must repent for the kingdom (Matt. 4:17). The kingdom of God is actually the exercise of the divine will. When sinners repent for the kingdom of God, they turn from the side of Satan to the side of God, which is the kingdom of God, the will of God. After a person turns from the satanic will to the divine will, he must believe in the Lord Jesus and be baptized. Through baptism he is brought out of the authority of darkness, the satanic will, and is transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13).

From the day we were saved, our Christian life has been a life of warfare. The same was true of the children of Israel after they made their exodus from Egypt. After eating the passover, they marched like an army out of the land of Egypt. This indicates that their eating of the passover lamb was a preparation for war. They were saved in an atmosphere of warfare. As soon as they came out of Egypt, the fighting began. Pharaoh and his chariots pursued the children of Israel, but God came in to fight for them. After the children of Israel had passed through the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army had been overthrown, God's people triumphantly praised Him for His victory over the enemy. The Israelites proceeded to fight their way through the wilderness, and they continued fighting in the good land. Their history thus reveals that the life of a saved one is a life of warfare.

We have seen that as the new man the church should walk according to truth and by grace and that as the bride the church should live in love and in light. However, not only must God's eternal purpose be fulfilled and the desire of Christ's heart be satisfied, but God's enemy must be defeated. For this, the church must be a warrior. Even in the Song of Songs we see that as the seeking one enjoys the Lord's presence, the fighting is going on. Therefore, we walk according to truth and by grace, we live in love and light, and we fight to subdue the satanic will. Our walk is for the fulfillment of God's purpose, our living is for the satisfaction of Christ, and our fighting is for the defeat of God's enemy. Hence, for these three things the church must be the new man, the bride, and the warrior. (*Life-study of Ephesians*, pp. 526-530)

THE HANNAH MINISTRY

There are many points in the history of Israel that are similar to the history of

the church. At the beginning of Israel's history we see Aaron as a priest representing man to God and Moses representing God to man. This stage did not last long. Soon after they entered into the land, they were ruled by judges. Their national life was on a very low level. We see them continually falling into sin and punishment by means of their enemies. When they cried to God, He would raise up a judge to deliver them, and then there would be a restoration. This happened again and again. We see this throughout the book of Judges. We read of Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Samson, and many others. There is a principle to be noted here. When the power of the judges was great, their deliverance was great, but when the power was diminished, the people fell into the hands of their enemies again. They fell and were raised up, sinned and were revived again and again. From this we see a great principle that God's people cannot govern themselves; they cannot be independent of God and be independent of Satan at the same time. This is an impossibility. They either have to bow to the authority of God or be under Satan's power; there is no middle road. When they were not under the control of God, they wholly lost their position as God's people. Consequently, they came under the power of their enemy. But praise God, His people were not always under Satan's power; there was revival.

This is the history of Israel, and it is the history of the church. Looking back, we can see that when the church reached a very low state, God would prepare a man of His choice, put His Spirit upon him, and commission him, and then the church would be revived. But after a period of time the church would go down again; there has been rising and falling, declension and restoration, again and again. If I was living in the period at the end of the time of the judges, what would be in my heart, what would I long after, and what would I even expect? I would know the history of the past years, and now that things were at a low ebb again, what would be my hope and what would I pray for? Would I not ask for another judge to be raised up to revive the nation again? I am a member of the church, and I have seen its history of being revived and falling again and again. I have read of the revival under Luther and of the deadness that followed, of the revival through Wesley and of the backsliding that followed, of the great tide of life brought in by Darby and the other Brethren and of the deterioration that followed. All these years the church has just been repeating the history of Israel under the judges. But what should I hope for *now*? Should it not be for something quite *new*?

At this point we come to the first book of Samuel. The history of the judges should not continue forever; this is not God's thought. God's thought is toward the kingdom and not toward having more judges. God wants to bring in a kingdom and a King. He used the judges on the way, but His thought was upon David, and His purpose was a *King*. So we see the importance of 1 Samuel. It comes in between the road and the goal. It comes in the middle and depicts a period of *transition*. For the most part, this was not a time of great revival nor of great backsliding. The same is true with us today. While our thoughts are always on revival, the time of the judges has past. It had its limitations, whereas the kingdom will last forever. God's thought is not that the church should remain in a cycle of backsliding and revival. God is not going to give us many revivalists; He is going to bring in His King.

The first book of Samuel stands for a ministry, a ministry that brings in the King. We do not have a judge, but one who was both a priest and prophet. It is very easy for us to fix our eyes on revivalists; they were used by God in the past on the way, as it were, but they have no part in the real purpose of God, in the bringing in of the King. God wants Samuels.

Now that we have seen the background, we must come to our verses. They are related to the story of the two women, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children; Hannah had none. Peninnah mocked Hannah by saying, "You have no children; look at all I have!" These two women represent two fundamentally different principles; they represent two fundamentally different ministries. Hannah's ministry was just to bring in the King, not to have many children. Peninnah's ministry was to have many children, that is, a ministry with much result. Peninnah and her children are God's people, but none of them have anything to do with God's King.

Hannah wept, fasted, prayed, and cried unto the Lord for a son who would be absolutely given to the Lord for His service. This son was the one who brought in the King. Hannah had nothing to be proud of. However, Peninnah had much to boast of. She could point to all her children and say, "I have this and that, all this and all that, etc." I want to say a word to you out of my heart. If you are still in the realm of the judges, you *can* be blessed and have results, but God's eyes are not on you. If these were not the last days, we would hope that Peninnah might have many more children. But if I am right, these *are* the last days, and God's eyes are on those who can be the means of bringing in the King. Let us ask ourselves, "What is our ministry? Have we any part in this special ministry, this Hannah ministry?" Some have no other thought but revival. They think that the principle of the judges will continue to the end. But there is the more important ministry of bringing in the King.

Hannah's way was not an easy way, and it was made even more difficult because of Peninnah's comparisons and tauntings. Those who want to be Hannahs must prepare themselves for persecution, scorn, weeping, and fasting. This ministry costs. A price has to be paid because all such ministry comes through testing and suffering; it has to be wrought into us. Others can eat and drink and look at their children, but here was one who fasted and wept. It is not a matter of how many we can save but a matter of God getting His company of overcomers. God wants to get a people who will be able to pray and bring in the kingdom.

Hannah's prayer was the means for the birth of Samuel. Our prayers should result in the bringing forth of overcomers. What have we done in this respect? Some who have worked much and have many children will say, "It seems that you are not doing anything. In the past you could lead revival meetings and do this and that. What are you doing now?" Even Eli, God's priest, did not understand Hannah. He said, "What are you doing? You are drunk."

From the birth of Samuel we see a line of prophets who could also be priests to bring in the King. Hannah bore a son—a prophet. God had done quite much with Hannah; He led her through all sorts of difficulties. As a result, He was able to find one who could put eating and drinking and all else aside. She came to the

point where she could not go on without a son; she came to a point where she *had* to have a son. The son in 1 Samuel 1 is the man-child of Revelation 12, the one who brings in the King and the kingdom. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 46, pp. 1177-1180)