

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

***Making Friends for God:
The Joy of Sharing in His Mission***

Lesson 4: Prayer Power: Interceding for Others

There is one prayer that will always be answered with a resounding “Yes!” from the throne of God. It’s in Luke 11 where Jesus tells about the man who had an unexpected hungry guest show up at midnight and he had no bread to feed him. He goes to his neighbor, bangs on the door, wakes him, asks, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.”

The point is, he is not saying, “Neighbor, I am hungry this midnight hour; feed me!” Rather, “Give me something I can pass on to someone else who is hungry.”

And the dear Lord assures us, “He [God] will rise and give him as many as he needeth” And then to underline the assurance, He adds, “Ask, and it shall be given you,” that is, to pass on to others (Luke 11:5-9).

You end up as a pipe through which some drops of the water of life flow to someone else. That’s heaven on earth! And of course you may never see the answer to your prayer this side of the new earth, but that’s okay. Just praying that prayer is joy enough, and thanking Him in advance. Now you have something to look forward to in heaven beyond your previous selfish desires—looking in the eyes of some now unknown recipient of the blessing you passed on. And you don’t have to “preach.” Just express love to someone.

In the great controversy between good and evil, intercessory prayer is a powerful weapon (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). God is doing everything He can to reach people without our prayers, but He is gracious and never violates their freedom of choice. However, our prayers make a difference because there are ground rules in the conflict between good and evil. One of the eternal laws of the universe is that God has given to every human being the freedom of choice. All the demons of darkness cannot force us to sin, and all the heavenly angels would never coerce us to do right. God voluntarily limits Himself by our choices. He does not use force to motivate our service to Him.

When we intercede for someone else, it enables God to work in ways that He could not work if we did not pray. In the cosmic conflict between the forces of heaven and the legions of darkness, God honors our freedom of choice to pray for another by powerfully working on their behalf. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Ellen White declares the efficacy of intercessory prayer in this remarkable statement: “Ministering angels are

waiting about the throne to instantly obey the mandate of Jesus Christ to answer every prayer offered in earnest, living faith.” [1]

As our prayers ascend to the throne of God, Jesus commissions heavenly angels to instantly descend to earth. He empowers them to beat back the forces of darkness that are battling for the mind of the individual for whom we are interceding. The individual has the freedom to choose Christ or Satan. Our prayers do not force or manipulate the will; they provide the best opportunity for the individual to see the issues clearly, providing them the best possibility of choosing eternal life.

How about praying the Lord’s Prayer? “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” (Matt. 6:13). It’s a complete prayer; it encompasses the entire plan of salvation.

Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we pray the prayer that may be over our heads in understanding: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (vs. 10).

The “kingdom” has not yet “come.” It’s been awaiting establishment now for 2000 years since Christ gave us this prayer of expectation; many who reverence the Bible as the Word of God wrestle with the conviction that it’s overdue. It’s been hindered. They also are convicted that if there is any delay, the honor of God will be compromised.

The coming of “the kingdom” is equivalent to the great “other angel [who] comes out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sits on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle, and reap; for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Rev. 14:15). It’s the grand close of probationary history of this earth.

The coming of the kingdom is also equivalent to the grand climax of Christ’s work as the world’s High Priest: “We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, ... not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:14, 15). The High Priest’s work is to reconcile the alienated hearts of God’s people to Him; another name for that is the ministry of the antitypical Day of Atonement, a simple word, at-one-with-God-in-heart. Yes, for that to happen would be a miracle; but that’s what the Lord’s Prayer has been praying for all this long while!

Another word for that is “the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary” (Dan. 8:14), a phrase that makes sense only if it is understood as the cleansing of the hearts of God’s people from all sin, known and also unknown. The honor and vindication of Christ in the “great controversy with Satan” is involved in thus establishing “the kingdom.” That is our true motivation, something that transcends our concern for saving our own poor little souls.

That includes the healing of the wound that Lucifer’s rebellion and Adam and Eve’s sin in joining with the great rebel, have caused.

Praying the Lord's Prayer constantly reminds you and me of the privilege we have of a part in bringing the great controversy to a close.

In fact, when we pray the Lord's Prayer we find we can't wait so we can get back to work to do what we can to help in the great crisis now going on.

Our part in the "great controversy" may be small; but the Lord does not "despise the day of small things" (Zech. 4:10). God delights in blessing you when you share a New Covenant truth with someone discouraged and confused. This helps fulfill the Lord's Prayer which says, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

—Paul E. Penno

Endnote:

[1] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 377.

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno's video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3DF_-8KcfM

Many of Pastor Penno's sermons are on YouTube in Spanish. Just type **pastor paul penno en español** in the search bar.

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