

Message Six

**A Praying Church in the Unique Stream of the Work of God**

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:13-14; 4:24-31; 6:4; 10:9-16; 12:4-14; 13:1-4; 16:23-26; 22:17-21

- I. “I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men; on behalf of kings and all who are in high position, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of our Savior God”—1 Tim. 2:1-3:**
- A. After speaking of God’s economy and after charging Timothy to war the good warfare for God’s economy (1:3-4, 18), Paul indicates that a prayer ministry is the prerequisite for the administration and shepherding of a local church.
  - B. A prerequisite for having a proper church life in the Lord’s recovery today is to have a prayer life; a proper church is a praying church.
  - C. All in the Lord’s recovery must be prayerful and stand against the sin of prayerlessness—1 Sam. 12:23.
  - D. The elders in the church must take up Paul’s charge to “first of all” pray; those who take the lead in the churches must have a prayer life.
  - E. If we exercise ourselves to have a prayer life, the church will be living and uplifted.
  - F. Instead of talking so much and even instead of working so much, we should pray more.
  - G. Only after we have prayed for a matter thoroughly should we make a decision concerning it, not by ourselves independently, but in oneness with the Lord and according to His leading.
  - H. The Greek word for *intercessions* denotes an approaching of God in a personal and confiding manner, that is, an intervening, an interfering, before God in others’ affairs for their benefit.
  - I. “Recently, my activity was limited for a time so that I could rest and care for my health. When I heard about certain needs, I prayed for them. Perhaps the Lord limited me that He might impress me with the fact that prayer is more important than work. May we all learn the lesson that the way to have a good church life is to pray. This is crucial. If our talking is turned into praying, the church in our locality will be transformed”—*Life-study of 1 Timothy*, p. 28.
  - J. We should pray on behalf of all men because our Savior God desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth; our prayer is required for the carrying out of God’s desire—1 Tim. 2:4.
  - K. “I desire therefore that men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and reasoning”—v. 8:
    - 1. Hands symbolize our doings:
      - a. Hence, holy hands signify a holy living, a living that is pious and that belongs to God; such a holy life strengthens our prayer life.
      - b. If our hands are not holy, our living is not holy and is not for God; we then have no supporting strength to pray, no holy hands to lift up in prayer.
    - 2. Wrath and reasoning kill our prayer:
      - a. Wrath is of our emotion, and reasoning is of our mind.
      - b. To have a prayer life and pray unceasingly, our emotion and mind must be regulated to be in a normal condition, under the control of the Spirit in our spirit.

**II. The book of Acts shows that the apostles never initiated any work without prayer; whenever they wanted to do something, they stopped themselves by their prayer, giving God a way to come into them, to fill them up, and to saturate their entire being—1:13-14; 2:1-4, 16-17a; 4:24-31; 6:4; 10:9-16; 12:4-14; 13:1-4; 16:23-26; 22:17-21:**

- A. Our God in heaven needs men on earth to cooperate with Him for the carrying out of His plan; after the Lord's resurrection and ascension, the one hundred twenty disciples had an "upper-room consecration" to meet God's need by continuing steadfastly with one accord in prayer—1:13-14; cf. Rev. 3:18.
- B. The book of Acts shows that our working together with God to build up the church is a spiritual warfare and that prayer is the secret to accomplish God's work—4:24-31; Psa. 2:1-2; Eph. 6:10-20.
- C. The prayers we utter before the Lord must stand against and resist "counter-prayers" that are directed particularly against the church and the work we are carrying out to build up the church—John 17:15; Matt. 6:13; cf. Psa. 31:20.

**III. The book of Acts does not have an ending because it is a record of the unique stream of the work of God, the stream of life, which is still flowing and never stops flowing—Rev. 22:1, 3; John 5:17; Matt. 25:21:**

- A. The Bible reveals the flowing Triune God—the Father as the fountain of life, the Son as the spring of life, and the Spirit as the river of life—Jer. 2:13; Psa. 36:9a; John 4:14; 7:37-39.
- B. The source of the flow is the throne of God and of the Lamb—Rev. 22:1.
- C. In the Scriptures there is only one flow, only one divine stream, the unique stream of the Lord's work—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; 3:12; cf. Gen. 2:10-14.
- D. The book of Acts reveals that in the move of the Lord there is only one stream and that we need to keep ourselves in this one stream—cf. 15:35-41:
  - 1. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this day, is just one stream.
  - 2. The history of the church shows that throughout the generations there has been one stream of the Spirit flowing all the time; many have been working for the Lord, but not all have been in the flowing of that one stream.
  - 3. The work in the flowing of the Holy Spirit is not a burden but a rest; the work is easy to do and the burden is easy to bear when it is the processed and consummated God as the Spirit living in us who does the work and bears the burden—Matt. 11:28-30; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 1:9; 1 Cor. 15:10.
  - 4. We must maintain the flowing of the stream within us by giving the Lord within us, the inner flow, the preeminence—Ezek. 47:1; Col. 1:18b.
  - 5. What we must do today is to go along with the flowing, the current, of the work of the Holy Spirit; whatever we do must not be according to our natural thought but according to His flowing—*Hymns*, #907:
    - a. "Not where we elect to go, / But where Jesus leads the way, / There the living waters flow, / There our darkness turns to day"—stanza 1.
    - b. "Not our self-appointed task / Will the Lord's approval win, / But the work we did not ask, / Finished humbly, just for Him"—stanza 2.
    - c. "Thus we die, and dying live / In the heavenlies with the Lord; / Thus we serve, and pray, and give, / Christ Himself our great Reward"—stanza 5.