

The Prayer the Church Should Have (1)

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The Ministry of the Church Prayer

Matthew 18: 18 – 20

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

Ephesians 1: 8 – 12

Which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Acts 1: 14

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 12: 5

So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

We thank the Lord for giving us this meeting. In the arrangement of the brothers, they asked me to share on the ministry of the church prayer. Of course we are to speak on this subject revolving around the theme ‘Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory’. When we pay attention to this point, we can see there is a problem that we have often neglected. It is not to say we do not gather together to pray. We often gather together to pray. But when brothers mentioned the ministry of the church prayer, it clearly brings us to one point: what is considered as the church prayer? What should be the content of the church prayer? Does the gathering of a few brothers and sisters to pray count as the church prayer? This can be accepted as the church prayer in name only. But if we look at church prayer in the light of the Lord, we can see

there are many shortcomings before the Lord. It is not that we do not pray. We all pray. The question is whether our prayer is the prayer that the church should have.

We found there is a difficulty when we talk about this point. And what is this difficulty? When we read the word of God, we can see there are many matters that the Lord spoke clearly and directly about them. But when it comes to the prayer of the church, we find that the teachings of the Lord on this matter are not that clear and not that obvious. From the epistles, we see that they did slightly touch upon this matter. So regarding the ministry of the church prayer, we cannot say we have no knowledge at all because we do know a little about it. But we cannot say we really understand it either. This causes some difficulties in us. Thus in a church prayer meeting, how can we demonstrate the ministry that the church should have regarding prayer? It seems that in the word of God, there are not too many places that address this issue. Yet, if we really pay attention to this matter, we found that our Lord did speak on this matter quite clearly. The problem is that we did not really take in the heart and mind of the Lord so as to enable us to accept His teaching on this matter.

The Neglect on this Matter by the Church

There is a general phenomenon in the church. If we ask ourselves about the meetings in the church, which is the least attended meeting in the church? I think brothers and sisters you all know. It has to be the church prayer meeting. Is there a reason for that? Yes, because many people will say, 'we already pray at home all the time, what is the difference between praying at home and praying in a church prayer meeting?' We feel there is not much difference if we do not pay attention to what the Lord told us. We thank God that He has given us the right to pray. We can pray at home. We can pray in the work place. We can pray while walking. If you learn from Brother Lawrence's 'Walk with God', you can pray wherever you are. And if we pray that way, will our manner of praying be acceptable to God?

We thank God that He has given us the right to pray. Through prayer, we fellowship with God; we look to Him; we serve Him and we worship Him. You can accomplish all these even if you pray alone by yourself. During the days when the Lord talked to His disciples about prayer, He seemed to let us know that there is another side to prayer that we need to learn. But there was something puzzling when our Lord talked about the ministry of the church prayer. The Lord was talking about another matter and not the ministry of the church prayer. But from that matter He led on to talk about the ministry of the church prayer. Because this is how the bible recorded it, we think that the Lord was giving the principle of dealing with that matter He was talking about. We missed the fact that He was teaching us how we should learn to practice the ministry of church prayer. However, when the word of the Lord opens up to us, then we can easily see that the Lord, through that matter, was leading us into the ministry of the church prayer. Even though He did not directly teach us how the church prayer should be, yet from what He was teaching

His disciples at that time, He already clearly told us how we can carry out the ministry of church prayer. In preparation for my sharing for this topic, I found that I have not tended to our Lord's heart and mind in this matter for a long time. Thus when the children of God think about this matter of prayer, they think everything seems fine. But when we return to our Lord's words on this matter of church prayer, we find that we cannot neglect what the Lord said any longer. We find that the ministry of church prayer will be limited even if there is a little negligence on this matter on our part. It will also foster a thought in the minds of brothers and sisters that since there are so many different church meetings, even if they do not go to the prayer meeting, there will still be people who go. Or they do not want to force themselves to go since they do not feel any difference after they went. My sharing today is not to ask brothers and sisters to go to prayer meeting. Rather, we would like to emphasize on how we should pray when we gathered together before the Lord until we can arrive at the purpose that God has in mind for the ministry of church prayer.

A Serious Fact

What I have just shared is based on Matthew chapter 18. The context before this chapter did not talk about prayer. Rather it talks about how to deal with the situation if conflicts arose among brothers and sisters. And in the process of settling the situation, what the church should do if the brother or sister who caused the conflict refused to listen to the church and continue to cause the conflict. Through the discussion of this matter, our Lord led us to the principle of the ministry of the church prayer. We need to pay attention to the order of the recording of our Lord's words in the bible by the Holy Spirit. Verse 17 says *'if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector'*.

The consequence of this matter that the Lord pointed out is very serious. If we did not grasp the point and purpose of the Lord's words, we will casually conclude that 'well, if you want to look at me as a Gentile, then go ahead. It has nothing to do with me. However you look at me does not affect me'. But if you really understand the content of what the Lord said, then the problem is very serious. He truly is my brother, but now because he would not listen to the Lord's leading due to the conflict, the Lord said we should consider him as a Gentile. If we know the seriousness of the consequence, then we know it is not a simple matter. Of course it does not mean if we look at him as a Gentile, then he is a Gentile. If that brother who caused the conflict is saved, then he is still saved. However, the spiritual fellowship with him becomes disrupted. This not only affects this brother's spiritual fellowship with other brothers and sisters but also affects his spiritual fellowship with God.

If we can realize the spiritual effect of this matter, then we can see there is something here. If we are to walk according to the will of God, the decision of the church is a very solemn matter. The Catholic church

is very adept at this. You can read it either in biographies or fictions that when the priest lost his temper, he will say ‘curse you’. On what power did he curse you? Who is he that he can curse you? We do not want to wander off that far. But when we read what the Lord said, we should have a feeling that indeed it affects not only the fellowship among brothers and sisters but also it affects our fellowship with God. And because of this, we see that the ministry of the church prayer brings out an authority that is very definite. We said here ‘Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory’. But when there is some difficulty within the church, how can ‘Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory’ be manifested? In our Lord’s teaching here, even though our Lord did not directly said ‘Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory’, yet He did bring the church to that glorious state into a practical reality. Thus do brothers and sisters now understand why I emphasize the importance of this matter in my sharing? It is not that I have the courage to say this. But when our Lord’s words open to us, then we cannot but acknowledge the seriousness of this matter.

The Authority of the Church

Brother and sister, if you continue on with verse 18, you will see the explanation that our Lord gave. Verse 18 said, *‘Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven’*. This is the first thing that we need to pay attention to. Verse 18 seems to explain verse 17. Why would the church have such a spiritual authority? It is because the church is to execute the authority of God. Maybe when we read verse 18, we do not feel this is what it said. Regardless, the brothers who know Greek pointed out to us very clearly one thing. And that is when our Lord said these words, He was very serious. The Chinese translation did not represent the tense of that sentence clearly. And there are other translations that have the same problem as well.

So where is this difficulty? When one read the Chinese and some other translations, one will conclude that the power of the church is indeed great. It is because the translation said, ‘whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’. In this translation, who is the one giving the order? In spiritual terms, the question is who is giving the order – heaven or the earth? According to this translation, it clearly said the earth is giving the order because it said whatever we bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever we loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Brother and sister, this is not a simple thing. If this is really so, then we will be very happy and we can forget about the prayer in Matthew chapter 6.

Earlier today our brother shared that sometimes when we pray before God, what we request may not be according to what we want. But when we pray for our own good, then what we ask will be definitely according to what we want. However, what is the teaching of our Lord in chapter 6? *‘Seek you first His*

kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you'. It means to ask less for yourself; ask more of the things of God. When you ask of the things of God, the result is that all of your own things will also be provided for. But when we come to chapter 18, we see a very different matter; whatever is bound on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. Brothers and sisters, if your prayer can be this effective, will you be happy? We will be so happy; everything will be mine. I can ask God for whatever I want because God has given us a promise that He is 'I AM'. What did God say to Moses? He said, 'I am who I am' which translates to 'I am 'I AM''. Our brother shared that there will be no problem in whatever you ask of God because God is what you want. If you want gold, He gives you gold. If you want status, He gives you status. So are you happy? You will be very happy. We are always so self-centered in our Adamic life. Why would we be not happy if all these things satisfy us? So when we read that whatever we bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, we will be so very happy because what is to be bound in heaven is according to what we want to bind.

Brothers and sisters, the words of the Lord did not mean that. If we look at the situation when our Lord spoke those words, we will realize a very serious fact. It explains to us why the church can have the spiritual authority to consider that a saved brother as a heathen. I say it again, you can look at him as a heathen, but you cannot say he is a heathen. He is a brother and his stand before God cannot change. The seriousness of the problem is this: even though his stand and identity is a brother, yet in reality he has lost his fellowship with the Lord.

So what really do these words mean? Sometimes it is hard to find the exact words to use in translation in other languages that can express clearly the meaning in the Greek language. Maybe if one can use more complicated words, one might be able to explain it clearer. I am not a Greek language expert. But I can offer a little of my understanding so that you will comprehend the actual authority of the church in the practical sense. The accurate translation should be '*Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven*'. Thus you see, brother and sister, the meaning is completely opposite. According to the translation in our Chinese bible, it is the earth directing the heaven. But returning to the fact of the matter when the Lord spoke those words, it is heaven directing the earth.

Why is it a serious matter if the church considers a brother as a heathen? It is because heaven has already placed him in a situation where his fellowship with God is disrupted. So if we can truly see this fact then we know this is a very serious matter. Now we can come back to look at what is the spiritual reality of the prayer of the church. Simply put, that is the ministry of the church prayer. We will not speak about service and worship. We will just concentrate on the matter of maintaining fellowship with God to remind us of the importance of the ministry of church the prayer.

The Ministry of the Church Prayer

What are the principle and content of the ministry of the church prayer? It is to execute the will of God.

Brother and sister, when we are brought into this light, then we can see there is a very intimate relationship between the ministry of the church prayer and the execution of the will of God. We ask the Lord, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit to help us understand this matter thoroughly. I am not going to say more about this point or else I will run out of time.

However I do want to go one step further from here on this matter to see what the Lord said. Verse 19 mentions another matter. We see that the Lord said, 'Again I say to you'. The Lord had already said something to them and now He had to say it once more. He was emphasizing on what He was going to tell them. And what was that? It was something that relates to why we have to pay serious attention to the ministry of the church prayer. He said, *'If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst'*.

Brother and sister, if you understand these verses; you can see indeed the meaning is deep. The Lord said where two or three gather together on earth in one accord to ask of anything, it shall be done for them by His Father in heaven. We need to take special note here. When I mentioned about the church prayer meeting just now, I do not mean that every member has to attend the meeting before it can be considered as the church prayer meeting. Instead we need to focus on the heart of God's children when they come to the prayer meeting. Thank our God because here He let us see that there is a promise. Maybe this promise has bothered some brothers and sisters in that they will think that if they pray alone, then God will not answer their prayers. Does it have to be at least two or three people gathered to pray together before God will answer their prayers? You might say it must not be because you have prayed alone for many things and God has answered your prayers. But when you come to this passage, the Lord said if you do not have two or three people praying together, then you do not have much of the conditions for your prayers being answered. How can you explain this? Brother and sister, we need to return to what we just mentioned. When you pray alone for yourself, it is not related to the execution of the will of God. But if you are touch on the matter of the execution of the will of God on earth, the Lord told us you need to have two or three praying together in one accord. And if you ask in this way, then the precious thing is that the Father in heaven will accomplish it for you. This indeed is a tremendous thing.

The Principle of the Ministry of the Church Prayer

Brothers and sisters, you need to pay attention to the few conditions the Lord laid out in His words. We should not neglect that. The first thing is the number of people. It absolutely cannot be just one person. It has to be several people, at least two or three. The more people the better. The second is that all these

people have to be of one accord. It is not enough just to have many people. Having more people is good but it will not solve any problem. What is important is that the Lord said it has to be of one accord. If it is one person, then it cannot be of one accord, so it has to be at least two people. If there are a hundred people praying together, all of them have to be of one accord. If you cannot be of one accord, then the promise of God cannot be accomplished. Why is there no outlet for God's work?

An Outlet for God's Promise

The first thing is what do brothers and sisters want God to do? What does God want to do in this universe? You might say God has done so many things in the universe, what does that have to do with our prayer meeting? We get this idea because usually what we pray in our Church prayer meeting is not connected to what God wants to do on earth. It is not that whether we have the church prayer meeting, but rather whether we have the ministry of the church prayer. So we want to look further into this matter. There are quite a number of young brothers and sisters in this conference. You have to ask yourself; what is the purpose for me in believing the Lord? What is His purpose of saving me? Maybe you will say why ask such a simple question. Brother and sister, it indeed is simple if we treat it as a simple question. God saves us so we will not perish but have eternal life. We already believed and are saved; is there more to it? We thank our God. Whenever God opens His heart to us, we will realize that the purpose of His salvation is a tremendous thing. The verses that we read in the first chapter of Ephesians open up that fact to us. What is the only thing that God wants to do in all His creations? I do not need to repeat it because our brothers last night and this afternoon talked quite a bit about it already. But I still want brothers and sisters to pay attention to the last verses in Ephesians chapter 1. The verses said what God wants to do. And what does God want to do? God will work until one day all things will be summed up in Christ. On that day we can truly see 'For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory'. It will be an unhindered practical truth.

But the problem is this. The universe is so big. The fall of man already caused a lot of complications. In addition, the rebellion of Satan made these complications more confusing. How can God accomplish the goal to have all things summed up in Christ? We thank our God. What God wants to do, He definitely will accomplish. But how can we, who in fact have limited understanding go about knowing the glorious will of God? We thank and praise our God. He explains clearly to us the things that are difficult for us to grasp. That is why when we read the Book of Ephesians just now, we need to take note of the sequence of the words spoken. It says the purpose is to sum up all things in Christ and then it was followed by saying that now God let this glory first demonstrated in those who are the first to hope in Christ.

What is meant by the phrase 'the first to hope in Christ'? Who are those who are 'the first to hope in Christ'? I do not think any explanation is needed here. If you are the first to hope in Christ, you will know

it. How can we know? We thank God. The grace of Christ's redemption has put us in that position. Not only are we a Christian saved by grace, but we also have the fact that we are the first to hope in Christ. What does that mean? It means that God is going to manifest His glory first in us; that God is going to accomplish in us what he wants. And then He is going to use those who are first to hope in Christ to broaden what He wants to do. He will continue to work to the extent until one day in the fullness of time He can say on His throne 'it is accomplished'. At that time all things will be summed up in Christ. Today we need to pay attention to how, those who are the first to hope in Christ, receive that hope and how they can broaden that hope. This is the fundamental point of the ministry of the church prayer.

Of One Accord

We now go back to look at Matthew chapter 18. The Lord said 'if two or three of you agree on earth about anything that you may ask, it shall be done for you by My Father in heaven'. Here it again mentions the conditions. Apart from having two or three people, there is another condition; they must also agree together, that is of one accord. What does it mean to be of one accord? This subject is pretty broad. But I will explain it in the possible simplest way.

These past few months, the whole world was very anxious about the debt limit of the United States. Eventually after many days of negotiation, a decision was made about a day ago. The world seemed to give a sign of relief. But the finger pointing was still there. I am not talking about the things of this world. I am just using it as an example. Brothers and sisters let me ask you. Even though a resolution has been made, were the people of one accord? I think no one can say that there was any total agreement among them. Each still kept his own idea and his own opinion. It seemed that there was a resolution and it seemed to be a good thing. Everyone could then relax. But was that of one accord? No, it was just a compromise. Each party gave up something.

Brothers and sisters, this is not the way of God. In God's way, what He wants to do is according to His own timing, His own way and His own order. It is not of one accord even if there is just a little disruption. Brothers and sisters, do meditate on this point.

Two or Three Gathered in My Name

And what is the other condition that follows after this? He said that if two or three are gathered together unto His name to pray for anything that two of them agreed on earth, it shall be done for them by His Father who is in heaven. This indeed is great because His Father who is in heaven will carry out for them. Brothers and sisters, what are the things that are so powerful that can get hold of God's heart that He has to carry them out for us? Thank our God. The Lord did not specify what those things are. But He did mention that if two or three agree on and pray for some matters, then the result is that the Father cannot but

answer the prayers. You will ask whether it is because we pray in His name. This is one of the reasons. But what does it mean by 'praying in His name'? 'In His name' does not mean we just say it, but rather what we said is what the Lord wants to say. And are what we say representative of the heart and mind of the Lord? If we are not saying it for the Lord, how can we pray in His name? When we think about this point, then we will know what the third condition is. And we need to know that these things have to be connected.

What is the third condition? Pay attention to the verse 'For where two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them'. If two or three in one accord gathered together in the Lord's name to ask of the Father, the Lord said He also will be in their midst. How can the Lord be in their midst? You have to remember it is because they gathered in His name. I have just mentioned 'in the Lord's name' is not just saying these words but to say what the Lord wants to say. It means then that you are led to a point where you stand on the Lord's side and say what the Lord wants to say. Seriously speaking, when we read this passage, we can say two or three gathered together in My name means two or three gathered together and enter into My name.

Brothers and sisters, we gathered together in one accord. What is it that we have agreed on? It does not mean I agree with your opinion and you accept my idea. But we all try to learn a lesson to gradually lay down all our opinions and ideas and accept the heart and mind of our Lord; we let His desire be our desire and our guide. This is what it means to gather together and enter into His name. So now you see that it is not a matter of two or three people. What matters is when you gather together, who do you represent? Who do you manifest? Whose ideas do you bring before God's presence? We thank our God that He wants us to learn this lesson in our ministry of the church prayer.

The Lord said where two or three gathered together in His name, then He will be in their midst. Brothers and sisters, this is another great matter. We cannot but thank our Lord. Through different matters, He leads us into the same lesson. For example, we said 'Lord, be with us'. The Lord's promise is that He will be in our midst. But the question is that what kind of effect does He want when He is with us? Does He just want to watch us doing this and that? Or is He leading us to choose whatever God wants when He is in our midst.

Recently our brothers and sisters in San Bruno started reading the Book of Revelation again. We shared on what John saw when he turned back to look. He saw seven golden candlesticks and walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks is one like the Son of Man. This deeply attracted the attention of the brothers and sisters. Let me ask brothers and sisters, what is the Lord doing in the midst of the seven candlesticks? From the seven letters we know that on one hand, He is examining and on the other hand He is directing. Regardless whether He is examining or directing, He has only one purpose. And that is to

bring the sons of God back into His own light so they recognize that He is the Head of the church. They need to know that He is the alpha and omega of the church and of course He is the content of the church. When we see this, then we will pay attention to what the Lord wants to do when He said 'I am in your midst'. We praise and thank our Lord He is in our midst to manifest that He is the head of the church. Thus all the church on earth will see that we follow Christ; and through who Christ is and what He has done we accept Him as our all in all. Then we can truly show that indeed we who are the first to hope in Christ are God's handiwork. Brothers and sisters, we truly need to thank and praise our Lord. When we returned to the time when the Lord talked to His disciples, even though He did not explicitly mention the ministry of the church prayer, yet He already talked about the concrete and spiritual reality of the ministry of the church prayer.

God Entrusted Man to carry out His Authority

At this time of our fellowship, I do not have time to go into quite a few things, yet I need to mention one thing: why does God lead us to carry out this matter? Kingdom, power and glory are all His. Just as our brother shared, why not God just destroy Satan when he rebelled? Why does God need to expend so much effort and energy? Brothers and sisters, we really treasure this because God entrusted this glorious task to those who were the first to hope in Christ. You will say since kingdom, power and glory are all His, why did not God directly handle it? Last night our brother already shared on this and I will not repeat it. But I need to point your attention to this: God, through us, who are a little lower than the angels, reveals what kind of a God He is. We are all faithless. And even though we can be faithless, yet our God is always faithful.

Brothers and sisters, we need to think back of one thing that God did when He created man. He gave man an authority when He created them. He entrusted this authority to man so man can exercise this authority on earth. It is an enormous thing that God entrusted to man His authority. But you might say it is not a big deal. However, when the Spirit of God opens our spirit and we see what it means, then we indeed acknowledge that it is a tremendous thing. II Timothy 2: 13 said, 'If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself'. How do you comprehend these words? Thank our Lord, when you see the ministry of the church prayer, at least you will come across this matter. I do not have time to give you more examples from the bible. If God is willing, then I will mention them the next time. But no matter what, we need to see clearly one thing: when God entrusted His authority to man, do you know that this causes a great limitation to God?

We might think, 'God You are the one with authority, why would You care whether man can be measured up to Your expectations or not'? He would answer, 'Just because I am God, therefore I have to be faithful'. When we read the words of God from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we see that

there are quite a few principles to God's work on earth. One of them is laid out in Matthew chapter 18. Why would God say whatever has been bound in heaven has to wait till people on earth pray for it before it can be executed? Why would whatever have been loosed in heaven need to wait till there are people with the same mind before God execute it? This is God's faithfulness. Once He has given this authority to man to govern the earth, even when He wants to do something on earth, He needs to find people with the same mind as His on earth. If He finds them, He will carry out His work. If He cannot find anyone, then He will just wait.

Brothers and sisters, there is one thing that I do not know whether it is correct to explain it this way. When you read of the time God wanted to destroy Sodom, does that cause you any perplexity? I was perplexed by it for a long time. I said, 'God, You are an all knowing God; You already knew what the people were doing in Sodom, so why was it that You, Yourself need to go down to Sodom to see whether it was true or false before You destroy it?' The doubt in my mind was that if this is the case, then 'God, I might have doubt that You are all-knowing'. I was puzzled for a long time on this matter. But thank God. Although I can be foolish yet God is not foolish like me. Suddenly one day, He enlightened me and I had an understanding. I do not know whether this understanding is accurate or not. I am not forcing you to accept this. But you can consider it.

The question was very simple. If Sodom was suddenly destroyed, no one would know who destroyed it. So God came down to inspect. And what was the purpose of the inspection? Of course it was not to see whether it was true or not. He came down to look for Abraham. In His fellowship with Abraham, we see that on the one hand, He wanted people to know the certainty of the destruction of Sodom; on the other hand, He wanted to see whether Abraham, a God-seeking man, agreed or disagreed with this action. From Abraham's conversation with God, we see that Abraham knew and that was why he stopped after he asked what if there were ten people who were righteous in Sodom. Why did Abraham stop? Can we say that Abraham had a feeling inside him that since kingdom, power and glory all belong to God, if God wanted to execute His holiness and righteousness, Abraham could not stop Him? He could only say, 'God, just do what You want'.

There was a similar situation that occurred at another time. It was when the Israelites worshipped the golden calves and God wanted to let Moses replace Israel. I will not go into the details. In man's opinion, when Moses heard from God that God was to use him to replace all that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had, Moses should be happy. But thank God. Moses knew that kingdom, power and glory are all His, so inside of Moses he knew very well that God could not go back on what He has predestined. 'If you want to use all I have to replace what You have predestined, of course that will be very good. But I cannot agree with You. You need to follow what You have predestined'. Brothers and sisters, you see from the Old Testament to the New Testament, our God has continuously worked according to what He has set up, so

that on one hand, people come to know that kingdom, power and glory are all His; and on the other hand, God wants to show that through the men He created, He will bring His glory into the completion of His eternal will.

The Prayer of the Church Grows to the Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ

When this conference started some twenty years ago, brothers and sisters had one desire and waiting and that was the Lord would hasten His return. But today the Lord still had not returned. Why did the Lord tarry? Some twenty years ago, brothers and sisters have already realized one thing in their heart: how could our Lord return if the Church still has not grown to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ? The Lord comes for the bride. But if the bride is not ready, how can the Lord return? Thank and praise our God. When we look at what we have fellowshiped tonight – that the Lord said ‘if two or three gathered in My name to pray, I will be in their midst’, we know the result is that the Father definitely will listen to our prayer.

And what is that prayer? It is the prayer that the Church grows to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The ones who are the first to hope in Christ will be brought into the stature as the bride. And how can we be brought to that stature? We have to learn of the ministry of the church prayer and in that ministry pray together in one accord. And in that one accord whose heart should we agree with? It is not yours or mine or his but the Lord’s heart. And when the entire Church is brought to that state, praise the Lord, for even if you ask the Lord to tarry, He will not consent to it.

May the Lord be gracious to us, so we can really understand the ministry of the church prayer. It is not that whether we attend the church prayer meeting or not, but whether we have entered into the ministry of the church prayer. We are all learning. No one is better than another. But in this matter of the ministry of the church prayer, we need to be brought by the Lord into His purpose. May the Lord be gracious to us.

Prayer: Our Lord, may Your words enter directly into our hearts. What man can say is very limited. Only when You open up Your heart and mind, then we will be brought into Your glorious will. Lord, we thank You. Through our daily spiritual learning, You lead us into Your purpose. May the Lord help us so that none of us will walk behind You or none of us will run ahead of You. Lord, lead us to walk on this earth as You had walked before when You were on earth. May Your will be able to find someone who is willing to accept Your supervision, guidance and leading to accomplish the eternal will of the Father. Lord, we again ask You to glorify Your name. May Your heavenly blessings be upon those who wait on You. We pray and look to You. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.