

Gen 18:33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Gen 19:29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

Questions:

- Does prayer begin with God or with man? Does it end with God or with man?
- In your prayer life, are you sensing the joy of partnership with God?
- Does your prayer life enable you to appropriate the character of God?
- Do you think your prayers can have an effect on the timing of God?

Gen 18:33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

- In one verse here at the end, **the purpose of prayer** is suggested to us:
- It does not say, "So the LORD went His way **as soon as Abraham had finished speaking to Him**." It says, "**as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham**." In other words, **Abraham did not quit here, God did**.
- The verse here suggests that **God had initiated** this whole conversation with Abraham and **led him along all through it**, and when **he had responded in fullness** as God desired, **God terminated the dialogue and went His way**. Abraham was not asking God to do something for Him; it was God who prayed in Abraham and set the limits of the conversation.
- **True prayer is never man talking to God, but God talking to God through man**. It is God who is causing Abraham to feel His own compassion and to reflect His own desire for an opportunity to show mercy. This is the reason for prayer.
- **Firstly, prayer makes possible, the joy of partnership**. Did you ever see a little boy come into the house and say to his mother, "I'm going to help daddy build the house!" Daddy could have done the job better by himself but he loves to have his son help him. And the son loves it, too. There is a **sense of partnership there**.
- **This is what prayer does**. God never moves all on His own. He loves to gather us in and have us help pound the nails. If we pound our fingers a little bit, He is there to soothe us, and to comfort us. This is why the apostle said we are called to be co-laborers with God, workers together with Him.
- **"Lord, break my heart with the things that break the heart of God."** That is a **hungering after this partnership with God**.
- **Secondly, prayer also enables us to appropriate the character of God**. Abraham is never more like God than at the moment he is praying for Sodom. His prayer **did not save the city**, and it was never intended to do so, but it **did make Abraham manifest in his own life the mercy and the compassion of God**.
- This is why God asks us to pray, **that we might take upon ourselves something of His own character**.
- In that great verse about prayer in *Philippians 4:6* *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made*

known to God; Php 4:7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- Circumstances will not be any different. You **rise from prayer and find your mother-in-law just as nasty as ever, your boss just as unreasonable, your children just as irritating, your husband just as stubborn, your wife just as bossy.** But you have the peace of God that passes all understanding, which keeps your heart and mind through any circumstance.

Gen 19:29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

- **Prayer focuses the power of God on an individual place or person.**
- So it was that, when *God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow*, destroyed the cities of the valley, **God remembered Abraham**, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow. Lot received salvation, although Abraham had never mentioned Lot by name. God remembered Abraham and saved Lot.
- **We don't know why prayer makes such a difference, but we know it does.** You can plan a program, think through all the details, set up all the committees, get all the things you need, instruct everybody, rehearse it and run it through -- and at the final presentation it may fall totally flat. But **if you involve others in the ministry of prayer concerning it, though the preparations may be similar, the difference in the presentation is that it comes with power, with impact, with full strength and lives are changed.** Prayer focuses the power of God.
- **Thirdly, the last principle here is that prayer affects the timing of God.** Prayer does not change, nor alter, the will or purpose of God. **Prayer is not a way to make God change his mind.** When He announces something, He will do it. When He declares He will move in a certain direction, He always moves in that direction and no amount of prayer will ever change it. However, **prayer can defer judgment, and prayer can also speed up blessing. It affects the timing.**
- **Time is one ingredient that God reserves for His own control.** *Acts 1:7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.*
- – Nineveh/Jonah - God postponed the destruction of Nineveh. **He waited until almost one hundred years later when the city was finally destroyed.**
- Hezekiah had a severe illness. He turned his face to the wall and wept and prayed and said, *"Oh, God, spare my life."* God heard and stopped Isaiah as he was going out the door and told him to turn around and go back with another message. **"God has heard your prayer and added fifteen years to your life."** (Isaiah 38:5). Prayer doesn't change God's purpose but **prayer does affect the timing.**
- There is a very fascinating verse along this line **which relates to our own lives today.** In 2 Peter, speaking about the problem of why God delays judgment, Peter says: **2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

- Then He says these words: **2Pe 3:11-12** *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*
- That means that **if we are walking before the Lord as Abraham did, and our hearts are available to God to pray through us, and to reflect through us the very passion that is in His heart, we can actually hasten the coming of Jesus Christ back to earth again.**
- **We can hasten the day** when the earth will be delivered from its oppressions and its burdens, and the golden age will break forth and righteousness will cover the earth.

Summary:

We have **learned great lessons today on prayer.** We see **indeed prayer is not a means by which we dictate to The Lord or summon Him to do what our will is, but rather it is the means by which we put our shoulder to the wheel to which His shoulder is put and are enlisted in a partnership with Him in His great enterprise and endeavors on earth.**

- **Prayer begins and ends with God and not with us!**
- **Our prayer life enables sensing the joy of partnership with God?**
- **Our prayer life also enables us to appropriate the character of God?**
- **Our prayer life does have an effect on the timing of God?**

Lord, **may we understand what we read, that we may have ears to hear, hearts that are willing to obey;** and that **we may therefore stand in the line of succession** to those of whom it is said, *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* In Jesus' name. Amen.

Holy, Holy, Holy- London Orchestra Festival

*1. Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!*

*2. Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.*

*4. Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.
AMEN!*

Sweet Hour of Prayer – Sandy Patti

*Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare,
By Thy return, sweet hour of prayer!*

I Need Thee Every Hour

*I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
no tender voice like Thine can peace afford.
Refrain:
I need Thee, O I need Thee; every hour I need Thee;
O bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee.*

Just as I am, Without one Plea

*Just as I am, without one plea,
Just as I am, without one plea,
but that Thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

Turn Your Eyes on Jesus

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace. (3X)*