

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
May 13, 2018

Intercession of the Holy Spirit
Romans 8:26-34

8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

8:27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

8:33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

8:34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

1. Intercession of Christ

Last Thursday was “Ascension Day of Our Lord” which we remember Jesus’ ascension to heaven. The Sunday after the Ascension Day is called “Ascension Sunday.”

Jesus went back heaven and sat “at the right hand of God.” He is at right hand, not left hand, and there is a meaning. In the Scripture, “right” indicates the authority or power. In Isaiah 41:10, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Therefore, the throne of the right hand of God is the most powerful seat of authority. Jesus is at the right hand of God means that Jesus becomes the King of God’s kingdom.

It was foretold in Psalm 110:1 that Jesus would be at the right hand of God. Psalm 110:1 says, “The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Jesus used this verse and said, “But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” (Luke 22:69) Peter also used this verse on the Pentecost Day, saying, “who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.” (1 Peter 3:22)

Jesus sits at the throne of the right hand of God as the King; however, at the same time, he is there as the High Priest. In Hebrew 8:1-2, “Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.” The duty of priest is being an intermediary between God and man. The priest receives the word of God and tells it

to men. The priest prays God for men. It is mediating between God and us. Christ is not only dominating the world with his word and power, but also praying for men. In Hebrew 4:14-16, “ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” The throne of rule became the “throne of grace” where we can find help anytime.

Every time I read this verse, I imagine that the Person who should sit on the throne with all glory and dignity slips down from there, kneels down, and prays for us. The Lord and the King intercedes for us. We have the most powerful intercessor in heaven. There is no more encouraging than this.

2. Intercession of the Holy Spirit

We have another intercession along the intercession of Christ. It’s the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26 teaches us about the intercession of the Holy Spirit, saying, “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”

All of us know well how prayer is important and necessary. Prayer is the power to grow our faith and solve problems. We also know that Christ is interceding with the Father for us. If so, we should pray more

boldly by faith and with confidence. But we are powerless in prayer. Even you are doing good work at your company and your work is recognized in the community, you find you are powerless in prayer which is the most important in your Christian life. Even you are involving many activities in church, you might not be able to pray deeply. Even you are rich in the knowledge of the Bible, you might be poor in your prayer life.

Romans 8:26 mentioned about “our weakness.” This “weakness” may be the spiritual weakness, especially, in prayer life. The churches in the U. S. are very strong in evangelism, missions, education, and also in social works. However, the churches became weaker and weaker in prayer. Church should be “the International House of Prayer” as in Isaiah 56:7, but, many churches are “the house of prayer” no more. If churches stop teaching prayer and the younger people have prayer-less life, what will happen with the churches? The churches will lose the faith and power and be not able to do good works no more.

Since the Lord knows our weakness in prayer, He gave us the Holy Spirit to save us from the weakness and empower us. He provided us His own intercession in heaven and the intercession of the Holy Spirit in the believers.

We understand that we have to pray hard when we meet big sufferings. But we, sometimes, cannot pray because of the sufferings. Even pastors find themselves not able to pray. I’ve heard a real story from one of pastors whom I know well. After his son was killed suddenly by a traffic accident, he could not pray for some months. He still believed in God, but he couldn’t pray. It might be a post

traumatic syndrome. I think that the words, “we do not know what to pray” also mean “we could not pray.”

However, even such time, our souls was still crying, “God,” “Lord,” and “Jesus.” This cry was generated by the Holy Spirit Who lives in the believers. Romans 8;15 says, “we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” Though you cannot add any words, after crying “Father,” you say a perfect prayer when you call God by His name. It will be alright just to repeat “Father,” or call Him “God” again and again. The Holy Spirit takes your prayer without words to the Lord, and the Lord will intercede the prayer with Father. Even you become not able to pray, the Holy Spirit always gives us the first word of prayer, which is the invocation of God’s name. If you repeat His word, you will find the words of prayer following the invocation. This comes from the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Power of Intercession

When we pray recognizing our weakness in prayer and trusting the intercession of the Holy Spirit, our prayers become truthful one. It is praying with the Holy Spirit that we ask the intercession of the Holy Spirit. When we pray with the Holy Spirit, our prayers will change. They are no more just signals of start and end of events, forms, and surface prayers. The Holy Spirit knows the minds of both of God and man. Though the intercession of the Holy Spirit, our minds go to God, and God’s mind comes to us. We know the mind of God and transform our mind according His mind though prayer with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit’s intercession is very powerful. His intercession

surely reaches God and move God's arm. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Who are "those who love God"? Those who call the name of God and pray with the Holy Spirit. How "all things work together for good"? By the intercession of the Holy Spirit. How can we know that all things have worked together for good? In prayer! By praying with the Holy Spirit!

If we don't pray with the Holy Spirit, we become careless for the will of God. We stop thinking what and how we should chose in our life, and eventually stop asking His will. We will become to chose things with our own favoritism or feelings. If we don't recognize His way in our daily life, we can not see that all things work together for good. However, those who pray with the Holy Spirit may be able to find God's works and see the answer of the prayer.

Romans 8:34 says, "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." Today's reading begins with the intercession of the Holy Spirit and ends with the intercession of Christ Who sits at the right hand of the Father. The Holy Spirit always leads us to fix our eyes on Christ. Those who pray by the Holy Spirit's intercession can look at the Lord at the right hand of the Father. They can pray trusting on the intercession of Christ. Pray remembering the double intercession of Christ and the Holy Spirit. When we recognize the double intercession, we can pray more truthfully, with full confidence. We can also intercede for others by His intercession.

(Prayer)

Father, You have prepared us the intercession of Christ in heaven in order that our prayers are able to reach You. Moreover, You gave us the intercession of the Holy Spirit for us who always find in prayer. Give us your power, confidence, and guidance of our prayer through the intercessions in heaven and in ourselves. Show us the Holy Spirit Who praying for us, and give us the prayers which are said with the Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.