

Series on The Prayers of the Apostle Paul
2 Corinthians 13:14

Sermon #11
July 23, 1995

THE BENEDICTION OF BENEDICTIONS

L. Dwight Custis

In our Sunday morning services, we are going through "The Prayers of the Apostle Paul" which we find in his epistles. We have been through 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, and we come to the last chapter of 2 Corinthians, where we have a very, very familiar benediction. 2 Corinthians 13:14. Probably of all of the benedictions that are mentioned in Scripture, this is the most familiar to people, and used over and over again. I am afraid many times it is used in formal services where perhaps attention is not given to it properly and maybe the meaning is not understood, but I trust that when we finish this morning we will at least know a little bit more about it.

Why don't you read it with me, the last verse of 2 Corinthians 13. You have heard it many, many times, I am sure.

Altogether.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen."

This is usually referred to as a benediction. If you hear it in a service, you usually hear it at the end of a service. A benediction is a blessing. I have called this "The Benediction of Benedictions," that is the greatest of all benedictions, because it brings together, as you can see, the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father and the Holy Spirit, and mentions a particular need that the people of God have which these three members of the Godhead are committed to give to us.

We all know that blessings can only come from God. We pray for blessings upon each other, but we cannot give blessing, can we? We may be instruments of blessing, but the blessing always has its origin in God. If it flows through us, then we are grateful to the Lord for the way He uses us. So, to pronounce a blessing, to pronounce a benediction, is really to seek a blessing from God.

Yesterday, at the wedding ceremony for Stephen Nagai and Susan Uchiyama, I closed with two benedictions, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. The one from the Old Testament is found in Numbers 6. Most of us have heard this very often as well. Spurgeon, on one occasion, spoke on this one in 2 Corinthians 13 and linked with it this familiar benediction from the Old Testament. You will notice that it refers to the Lord three times. Many who have taught this passage of Scripture believe that just in 2 Corinthians 13:14 we have the Son and the Father and the Holy Spirit, so these three references to the Lord in Numbers 6 may mean a reference also to the three members of the

Godhead in the Old Testament. Let me read it for you.

"The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

It is important, I think, to notice when you look at that benediction in the Old Testament which Aaron and the priests were to pronounce over the people of God, that they were commanded to us this as they sought the blessing of God upon Israel. It is very likely that many times a day the priests would repeat this: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee..." Just before this (Numbers 6:23), you will see this that the Lord said, "Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them," and the words follow. After the benediction, Moses concluded the sixth chapter of Numbers (v. 27) with these words: "They shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them." The Lord was saying to the priests, "You pray this prayer and I assure you that I will answer this prayer." God is far more concerned about blessing us than we are conscious of our need of His blessing. So it is interesting to bring these together.

Arthur Pink, whose name many of you will recognize, pointed out in his book on The Prayers of the Apostle Paul that "no such command was given to Paul regarding this benediction which comes at the end of 2 Corinthians. Paul just simply states it, and it comes rather abruptly. He just takes very few words to conclude this, and then he goes into the benediction, and with the "amen" he puts his pen down and the epistle comes to a conclusion. It just appears and there it is: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."

The fact that this benediction has been used over and over again by the people of God since the day it was written is an indication that God keeps this benediction alive. As I have said, it may be used in churches that are formalistic and depend a great deal on ritual, may not preach the Gospel, but nevertheless people are hearing it.

Arthur Pink, to quote him again, says that "this is really a confession of the Christian faith as well as a declaration of Christian privilege." By this he meant that if we use this verse as Paul did, it is a confession that we believe that there are three members of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that there is blessing for the people of God flowing from the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. We know that it is our privilege as Christians this far away from the time that this benediction was written to expect these blessings because it has become a part of the Word of God.

It is not enough that we know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit, but this is a prayer of benediction, seeking from God the blessing of enjoying grace and love and communion. Furthermore, when you bring all three members of the Godhead together in one prayer seeking blessing from them, what can you call it but the benediction of benedictions. There is no blessing that can possibly surpass these blessings. It is interesting to see that the Holy Spirit directed Paul to write this way and to pray this way so that you and I would know how greatly concerned God is that we have His blessing. Sometimes we pray like God is reluctant to bless us, but God is a God Who pours out His blessing upon us. We rejoice in all that He does for us from day to day.

Now let's look at these in the time that we have this morning. I trust that the Lord will make all of this clear to us and perhaps enable us to enter more into what Paul was concerned about for the Corinthian church.

You remember, as we have seen on other occasions, that things seemed to be better in the Corinthian church

when Paul wrote his second epistle to them, but they were in great trouble spiritually when he wrote his first epistle. It does not seem that there was much time between the writing of the first epistle and the writing of the second one, so God was at work using what He had to say in the first epistle. We see that things were improved and an entirely different character to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. But the benediction at the end was evidently an expression of Paul's desire, his deep concern, that the blessing that had been restored would continue and actually increase in all of their lives. You will notice at the end of this benediction, after speaking of the grace of the Lord and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit, he says "be with you all. Amen." So this was for a church that had been in trouble, God had providentially brought them out of trouble, and he wanted to see this blessing continue.

Perhaps, as you look at this benediction, you notice something that others have noticed and I noticed that is a little bit strange. When we speak of the members of the Godhead, we usually put the Father first, don't we, and then we speak of the Lord Jesus Christ and then we speak of the Holy Spirit. We have that pattern, for example, when the Lord told His disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Yet, when you come here, you notice that it is the Lord Jesus Christ Who is mentioned first: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, then the love of God, and finally, the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Why is this, especially when there are so many passages that speak of the grace of God? "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." And so on, you know that passage of Scripture. I called up on my computer the references to grace in the New Testament. There are many, many more references to the grace of God than expressions where you find grace related to the Lord Jesus.

In one of my past messages, when we were looking at the conclusion of some of these epistles, I pointed out to you that in a number of Paul's epistles he does conclude by simply saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." He does not make any reference to God. He does not make any reference to the Holy Spirit. He ended 1 Corinthians that way: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1 Cor. 16:23).

It is not unusual for us to find grace related to the Lord Jesus Christ, but why is He mentioned here first. I think that probably the reason--I do not know that we can understand all of the reasons--but probably the reason is because it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we have access to all of the blessings that eventually come to us from God. We would never have come to God if it had not been for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Himself told us, "No man can come unto the Father but by me." Paul seems to be teaching this, recognizing this here, and it is brought out earlier in this epistle when in 2 Corinthians 8:9 we read:

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." We find in Peter's first epistle a verse where he does not actually mention grace, but he mentions how we have been brought to God. He says this: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter. 3:18).

We come to God for salvation, but we have to come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. When we pray, we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our access to God is always through the Lord Jesus Christ. What the Lord Jesus Christ did first in bringing us to God and transforming our lives, He did by pure grace. There is not a one of us here today--you will never find a Christian who deserves salvation. We deserve the judgment of God. We deserve to be forgotten and cast forever from His presence, but because of God's grace and because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have received what we could never deserve,

what we do not earn. It is a gift of His mercy and His love. We did not even ask Him for it, did we? We were not interested in coming to God. God took the initiative in our lives. He is the One Who began to work in our hearts. He is the One Who drew us to Himself. He is the One Who gave us the faith to believe. All of the glory belongs to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for this wonderful salvation that we have. In grace He came to die for us. In grace He sought us. In grace He put a desire in our hearts to know God, and then brought us to Him. We have the forgiveness of our sins through grace.

In thinking about our lives as Christians, you know, we never, never get away from the need of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That same grace that saved us is the grace that is bestowed upon us through the Lord Jesus Christ every day. It is bestowed upon us often when we do not have the wisdom to ask for it. The Lord is continually meeting our needs in grace. It is by this grace that He keeps us and it is by this grace that He strengthens us. There is not anything easy about the Christian life. We live in a world that is hostile toward anything that has to do with the Gospel. That is becoming more and more apparent in the generation in which we live. As we sing in the hymn "This world is not a friend of grace." We do not get any encouragement from the world to walk with God or to trust God or to talk about God or to glorify Him or the Lord Jesus Christ. Every day that we live, as we face the opportunities of our lives, as we face our responsibilities, as we face our trials and testings, we need grace. We are in constant need of grace. It is wonderful to think, isn't it, that whether you are talking about the grace of the Lord or the love of God or the communion of the Holy Spirit, we have access to a God, and these resources are to be found in them in an inexhaustible supply. From the time the first person came to know God, the people of God have been drawing upon the Lord for His grace, for His strength, for His mercy, every day. We can be thankful that Jeremiah wrote in his lamentations that "God's mercies are new every morning." That is, the supply is replenished is the picture there. The Lord Jesus Christ, in this instance, is never going to run out of grace which you and I are going to need every day that we live. If we were to call upon Him all at once, why we would all find that His grace is available for us. Every day we sin. Every day we fail. Every day we make our mistakes. Every day we find our hearts drawn away from God by the world and all the things in the world. We need grace to strengthen us in times of temptation.

It was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). What did Paul understand about that in his response? He said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9). You see, you need the grace of Christ which is the power of Christ in order to be faithful to the Lord in order to live for Him every day. That is exactly what I need just as much as you do. So, it is the same grace that saves us, that keeps us, and strengthens us, or it would be impossible for us, living in a world like this, being the kind of people that we are, to ever make any progress in our relationship with the Lord. So, true blessing in our lives finds its source in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Anyone who reads the New Testament, in fact, reads 2 Corinthians, and comes to understand something of what the Apostle Paul went through in his ministry cannot help but marvel at his faithfulness to the Lord in the most difficult and trying circumstances that he faced. If you are not familiar with the passage, why just turn a page in your Bible back toward the front. You will notice there in 2 Corinthians 11 that he talks about the things that he had gone through. He talks in 11:23 he says, "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool" - because it was not his habit to speak of what was happening to him.)..." Notices what he says: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen (the Gentiles), in perils in the

city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not" (2 Corinthians 11:23-31).

My biography does not read that way, and I know that your biography does not read that way. There is a sense in which we might be inclined to put the Apostle Paul on a pedestal and say, "Any man who could go through all of this and remain in the ministry is really an outstanding man." It is just very, very unusual.

But listen to what the Apostle Paul had to say about himself. In fact, you can see it in this passage that I just read to you. We wonder how a man could endure all that he went through because all that he had to do to stop it was to be quiet about Jesus Christ. If he would just shut his mouth, never preach the Gospel, never try to win anybody to Christ, all that suffering would have stopped. But he could not do that. As he wrote his last epistle, and we know that was 2 Timothy, he gives us the answer as to how he could endure all these things. He was speaking of the harm which Alexander the coppersmith did to him. I hear some of you turning in your Bibles. I am referring to 2 Timothy 4 beginning with verse 16. He is talking about problems that he was facing. This was at the end of his life, just prior to his martyrdom. He says, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding [and here is the key:] the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me (that is the grace of the Lord); that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: (and just by the way...) and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Then he says, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2 Timothy 4:16-18).

You see, why Paul was able to experience all of these things and continue on in his ministry was not because he was some kind of superman, but it was because he had learned that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ was sufficient for him, and he was continually drawing upon that grace to meet his need through all of these terrible experiences that he had. If Paul were here this morning, he would say, "Don't glorify me. I am just as weak as you are. I fail the Lord like you do, and I would fail Him worse than I have if it were not for the fact that daily He is supplying me with His grace." Paul, knowing his own need, was looking to the Lord for the supply of that grace. He did not have any corner on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is just as available to you and to me today as it was to him then. So in all of our trials you and I can depend upon the fact that God's grace is sufficient for us as it was for him.

What was the secret of Paul's faithful and fruitful ministry? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second part of this is "the love of God."

This is an interesting request. If the grace of Christ is amazing, then the love of God is just as amazing. But what did Paul mean by praying that the love of God would be with them? Let me ask this question: Is it possible that there are times in our lives when God stops loving us? I thought that He told Jeremiah, speaking of His people in the Old Testament, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." If He loves us with an everlasting love, then that means that there can never be a time in our lives, regardless of what we go through, when the Lord even loves us a little bit less than He has in the past. Our hope, our confidence in God is that His love is steadfast and it never changes. He set His love upon us even before we knew Him.

How, then, was it that Paul was concerned about the love of God being with us?

It seems to me that the Apostle Paul was referring to something that the Lord said to His disciples when He was with them in the Upper Room recorded for us in John 14, 15, and 16, but especially in John 14. Remember, He said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). A couple of verses later the Lord said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Does this mean that if we are ever disobedient God's love is interrupted? We might take it that way. But, you see, what the Lord Jesus Christ was talking about was the consciousness of God's love and entering into fellowship with the Father so that if the love of God is to be with us, then this means that these Corinthian believers had to give daily attention to something that they had very tragically neglected. That was their daily obedience to the Word of God. You see, it is not that if you are obedient to the Lord He love you more; but if you are obedient to the Lord, you are being drawn into a closer fellowship and you are being conscious of that love in a most wonderful way. Through all of the trials and testings, and you think of the Apostle Paul and all that he went through, one of the truths that would undergird him and strengthen him in all of his work was that, though he had to say sometimes that "no man stood with me, Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world," yet through all of this, because of the way that the Apostle Paul by God's grace was seeking to obey the Lord and to live in obedience to His Word, there was that consciousness that though everybody would forsake him, the Lord loved him and the Lord was going to stand by him and the Lord was going to meet his need.

These were verses that came to Lucille and me through a friend of ours years and years ago. I do not think either one of us will ever forget the impression that this made on our lives. The Lord has given us His Word because He wants to guide our lives. We are never sorry when we do what the Lord tells us to do in His Word or when we do not do what He tells us not to do. All through the Word we can see how the Lord wants us to live. Do you know what the Christian life is? It is all here. God has given us everything in His Word that is sufficient for life and godliness. It is so easy to look over these instructions and commandments that are given to us in the Word of God and not really pay any attention to them. Yet, if we really love Him, the Lord said, you remember, "If you love me, keep my commandments." It behooves every one of us as we are here this morning in this service to ask the Lord to search our hearts as to how careful we are about doing the things that the Lord wants us to do about being obedient to His Word.

I believe that when Paul was praying that the love of God would be with them, he was praying that they would continue to walk in obedience to the Word of God.

Now let's look at the last one, "the communion of the Holy Spirit."

The King James reads, "the Holy Ghost." I prefer the expression "the Holy Spirit," and I usually say Holy Spirit even when the King James says the Holy Ghost because that is really, I think, a misunderstanding of the person of the Holy Spirit.

I was interested to see in one of Spurgeon's messages preached about the middle of the eighteen hundreds. He said that the title "Holy Ghost," and this comes from a dignified Englishman, "is weird and ugly." He recommended that we abandon it entirely. The Greek says, "Spirit." Holy Spirit. I know I have ruined that for you. You read it any way you like, but I prefer to say "Holy Spirit."

We speak of Him as the third person of the Godhead. I think most of us know, or we should know, that when we were saved, the Holy Spirit came to indwell us. You can never drive Him away. You can ignore Him, but He will never leave you. The Lord Jesus said that He is come to abide with you for ever.

The Apostle Paul was concerned about the relationship of the Corinthian church to the Holy Spirit. Communion is a translation of the Greek work "Koinonia." You know that that is the word which is usually translated "fellowship." He is concerned here about the fellowship that the Corinthian believers were having with the Holy Spirit. I think most of our modern translations, like the New American Standard and the New King James and the New International Version, all speak of it as the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

The word "fellowship" is a word which I am afraid has been misused even by many of us who know the Lord. We call it fellowship when a group of Christians get together, but many times, to our shame when we get together, we spend practically no time talking about the Lord or talking about His Word. We may talk about politics, or we may talk about some sports event or some recent news event, or talk about our families--we all love to do that, don't we? Or, any number of other subjects which in their place are perfectly proper. But we are having fellowship, Christian fellowship, when we are talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, Who He is, what He is doing in our lives, How He is working with us, what we are learning. The word "fellowship" is a word which means that we are participating together in something. This expression "the communion of the Holy Spirit" is a word which means that the Holy Spirit has some things that He wants to share with us. He wants us to participate in something that He is going to tell us. It is a very, very precious and wonderful expression. The same message that the Lord gave in the Upper Room is a message that tells us about what the Holy Spirit wants to communicate to us.

I am going to ask you, if you will this morning, to turn to John 14 again, and look at these verse with me, because these tell us a little bit about what the Holy Spirit wants to communicate with us, what He wants to share with us, what He wants to tell us, how we can really enter into fellowship with Him.

In John 14:26 we read this, and this is the Lord Jesus speaking: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

I have a red letter Bible, that is, where the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are in red in the Gospels, and you find a glimpse of this also in the Book of Acts where the Lord spoke, and even in 2 Corinthians 12, in my Bible, where the Lord responded by saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." That is in red because that is what the Lord said to the Apostle Paul, not while He was on earth, but He spoke to Him in some special way from heaven.

When you read through the Gospels, you know how the Gospels are just full of red ink, if you have a red letter edition of the Bible. These are words that were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. While the Lord was with His disciples, He said, "When I leave the Holy Spirit is going to come, and the Holy Spirit is going to explain to you and help you to understand everything that I have said to you while I was here on earth."

All of the Bible is important. I do not think any of us would argue about that. But if there is any part of it that we might consider to be just a little bit above the rest, it would have to be the words of the Lord Jesus, wouldn't it?

The Holy Spirit has been given to us to remind us of what the Lord Jesus said and to help us to understand

it so that by His grace our lives can be brought into conformity with it and so we can enjoy the peace and blessing that always comes to us through the Word of God. When Paul prayed that "the communion of the Holy Spirit would be with them," he was praying that they would know in their daily lives what it is to be Spirit taught. Do you remember how 1 Corinthians begins and how Paul was so concerned because they had not been paying much attention to the Holy Spirit? He said, for example, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9-10). You see, even when I speak to you this morning, or when you read your Bible, if the Holy Spirit is not using me to help you understand the Word of God, then there is no point in my being up here. Such a responsibility is way beyond me. But the Holy Spirit takes these things that the Lord Jesus said and He reminds us of them and He helps us to understand what they mean.

Let your eye run on to John 15:26, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father..." By the way, here is a verse where we have all three members of the Godhead in one verse: The Comforter is the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the Holy Spirit going to do? "...He shall testify of me."

One way that you can tell if the Holy Spirit is really ministering to you and you are really submissive to Him and depending upon Him to teach you, one way that you can tell is that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to become more precious to you and you are going to enjoy talking about Him. Notice what it says, "He shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness..." That is, the Holy Spirit ministers to me, and because of what He is teaching me I talk to others about Him. That is what the Holy Spirit wants us to participate in.

One more passage. Will you turn to the sixteenth chapter of John and look at verse 13? "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself ('from himself' is what it means); but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." Now look at verse 12. The Lord Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." When the Spirit comes, He is going to guide you into all truth because He will be listening to me and He wants to tell you what I have told Him to make known to you. Whatever He hears, that shall He speak and He will show you things to come. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:12-14).

What truth was the Lord talking about? He was talking about His truth. He is talking about this Word. The Holy Spirit is just as familiar with the Book of Ezekiel as He is with the Gospel of John, because He is the Author of both. He wants to guide us into all the truth. Don't neglect any part of the Word of God. You and I have the teacher dwelling in us and He is there to communicate this. He is there to share this truth with us. It was the burden of the Apostle Paul that the Corinthian church, which had neglected the ministry of the Holy Spirit, would realize Who their teacher is and would spend time in the Word depending upon the Holy Spirit to take the things of Christ and show them to them and to guide them into all the truth so that their lives could be pleasing to the Lord.

That is a marvelous prayer, isn't it? You know, you do not have to pray a long prayer to pray a very effective prayer. It does not take a minute to read this. Perhaps it does not even take thirty seconds to read it. But, oh, if we know what is here, we can be praying this for each other so that when we come to the conclusion of a service and a benediction like this is pronounced we will see that when we talk about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and we talk about the love of God and the fellowship that we can enjoy with Him, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to our own hearts, there is not anything else that you can say. That

includes it all, doesn't it? This is the benediction of benedictions. By the grace of God let's not only pray this for each other, let's pray this for ourselves. When we sit down to listen to a message, or we sit down to read our Bibles, may our hearts be lifted momentarily to the Holy Spirit our teacher and says, "Now, Lord, show me the things of Christ, guide me into the truth. I want to live the way You want me to live. I want to glorify You in my life. I need strength because I will fail you constantly, if you don't, if you do not minister to me." See how different our fellowship and our relationship with the Lord can be when we take Him at His Word and really seek the things that are important to the Lord Jesus Christ, to God our Father, and to the Holy Spirit.