

IF JESUS IS THE ONLY GOD, TO WHOM DID HE PRAY?

Rom 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

In answering the title of this sermon, we first need to demonstrate that God is one and indivisible, and that the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. Israel is the root of the Christian church, and Israel has only known one God who exists alone and by himself. In fact, this is the greatest of all commandments entrusted to Israel. “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29). Next, the Lord himself declared that he would return to be with the apostles as the Holy Spirit. “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18). This the Lord did on the Day of Pentecost. We have other scriptures which also identify the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor 3:17). We shall cite one more scripture before moving on to our subject. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). Clearly, the Spirit we have received is none other than that of the Son, Jesus Christ. Once we have established that God is one, and that the Lord Jesus is both the Son and the Holy Spirit, we can go on to consider why this one God, Jesus, prayed for us.

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Rom 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

According to the apostle Paul, we are unable to pray as we ought. In other words, there is a certain quality and standard that God expects in prayer, something we fallen humans are unable to attain to. To compound this problem, we do not seem capable of praying according to God’s will. This is why God, in his mercy, intercedes through us – Jesus enters into his people and fulfills the criteria of prayer for us – “but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26). All the Lord needs is our permission to occupy our bodies and souls – his Temples – and intercede through us. We must understand there is a principle of intercession that God cannot compromise with: without sincere and fervent intercession, the will of God cannot be accomplished on earth. We see this principle throughout the Bible. Abraham interceded with God for Sodom and Gomorrah. “And he said,

Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake” (Genesis 18:32). The great teacher of the Law, Ezra, was overwhelmed with a spirit of prayer and plucked his beard because of the sins of Israel in Babylon.

Ezra 9:3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.

Ezra 9:4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

All God’s purposes are accomplished through prayer and intercession. In regard to our salvation, only the prayers of God himself, who is Jesus, were found to be efficacious. Neither Abraham, Noah, Daniel, Esther or anyone else was found worthy to pray for the salvation of humanity except the Lord himself. Who can pray effectively for the sins of humanity since Adam? The task is impossible for humans but possible for God. “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4,5). This background is important if we are to understand the struggle of the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane is where the Lord took the collective rebellion of humanity against the will of God since Adam and Eve, wrestled ferociously with this insubordinate will, and brought it to submission under his authority.

Luke 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

Luke 22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

Luke 22:44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

The cup, agony and rebellious will are not the Lord’s, but ours. This is what the prophet Isaiah meant when he said, “Surely he hath borne our griefs ...” (Isaiah 53:4). The Lord had no sin, and no insubordinate will. He was sinless and, as God, cannot even be tempted with sin. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13). Hence, being sinless, he could not be praying for himself. Secondly, and contrary to what Trinitarians say, the Son is not praying to the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity itself states that the three are co-equal. If that is the case, one God praying to another would not be considered equality. The third position, held by some Oneness Pentecostals, such as the UPCI, is also erroneous. This

position contends that the human nature of the Lord prayed to the divine nature. This does not make sense at all. A nature cannot pray to another nature within one person. A person prays – not a nature. The problem with this position is that, while they reject the doctrine of the Trinity from the Council of Nicea (AD 325), they still uphold the doctrine of the dual nature from the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) where Pope Leo I coined the terms “dual nature”. The only sound explanation can be the one that aligns with the Bible and the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 8:26 – “The Spirit itself maketh intercession ...” In other words, the Spirit of God prayed – not one member of the Trinity to another or one nature to another. It is vital that all God-fearing Christians discard the confusion of man-made doctrines and return to the doctrine of the Apostles. Let us hear the Apostles, as the Lord commanded.

***Luke 10:16** He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.*

Let us summarize the message today: technically speaking, the prayers of the Lord Jesus were addressed back to himself, as he alone is God. This can be the only logical and sound exegesis (critical explanation of a text, especially scripture). To believe otherwise is to entertain a plurality of Gods – an abominable thought. We believe that God is one and dwells alone in the mathematical sense of the word. “And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth” (2 Kings 19:15). The One God, who is Spirit, was manifested in the flesh (John 1:14). God is now Spirit, flesh and blood in one person – Jesus Christ. He not only came to die for our sins on the Cross but prayed and interceded for us because we were unable to do so, as Paul explains in Romans 8:26. Jesus is still interceding through us today. He brings Zion (the church) into labor, and he causes children to be born through his prayerful labors with tears and sweat. Just as a woman cannot decide the moment, duration and intensity of her labor pains, we cannot know when and how the Lord will labor in prayer through us. But wonderful things happen when the Lord labors in prayer through us – mighty spiritual blessings follow. May Jesus labor prayer in you and me!

***Isaiah 66:7** Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.*

***Isaiah 66:8** Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.*

***Isaiah 66:9** Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.*