

PENTECOST: IN FAITH WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 12)

July 29, 2007

Genesis 18:20-32

Psalm 138

Colossians 2:6-15 [16-19]

Luke 11:1-13

Prayers, Petitions, and Praises

The passage in Genesis portrays a poignant glimpse of Abraham petitioning God on behalf of the good people who live in Sodom. God's plan to destroy the city because of its wickedness causes Abraham to beg God to stay his judgment if fifty good people can be found. Although the Lord agrees, Abraham courageously petitions God five more times until God consents to save the city from destruction if only ten good people can be found.

Such unabashed persistence is also found in the example Jesus gives about the man who awakens his friend at midnight seeking food for an unexpected guest (Luke 11:5-8). Despite the sleepy friend's lethargic response, Jesus suggests that the man in need will get what he wants simply because he was not ashamed to be persistent in his request.

In similar fashion, Jesus contends that we, too, need to pray and petition God for the things that we need. "So I tell you to ask and you will receive, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you" (Luke 11:9, *CEV*). Jesus tells us that if we are capable of responding to each other's needs favorably, how much more will God, who has created all things, respond to our requests when we ask (Luke 11:13).

How then shall we ask? In what is commonly known as The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2-4), Jesus provides a prayer model which acknowledges God's sovereignty, puts forward a request for physical and spiritual provision, and ends by seeking forgiveness for one's self (in the same manner as we forgive those who have wronged us) and protection against temptation.

By his own example, Jesus shows us that prayer should be consistent communication with God, whatever the circumstances (Luke 9:18-21; Luke 9:28-36; Luke 22:39-46; John 17).

In addition to our petitions and prayers, we are instructed to praise God. The Scriptures say that God delights in the praises of his people. And so, we may join in the elation of the psalmist when he says: "With all my heart I praise you, LORD. In the presence of

angels I sing your praises. I worship at your holy temple and praise you for your love and your faithfulness (Psalm 138:1,2a, *CEV*).

Indeed, we serve a mighty God who hears and answers our prayers and petitions even before we utter them (Isaiah 64:24). Let us come before our God with thanksgiving and praise because he is worthy of honor and glory.

This week's Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor in the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Bulgaria – With thanks to God for the “Year of the Bible” and with prayers for the successful launch of the new Children’s Bible and for the distribution of Bible stories to children in orphanages; **Romania** – With prayers for God’s guidance for the interconfessional New Testament translation team and for plans to produce an audio New Testament, and with prayers for ministries to soldiers, prisoners, the elderly, children, HIV/AIDS patients, drug addicts, and other population groups; **Moldava** – With thanks to God for opportunities to teach children biblical values, and with prayers for God’s guidance in developing special materials for young people, and for fundraising efforts in the midst of a weakened economy, and for the ability to print a special edition of the New Testament for the armed forces; **Ukraine** – With prayers for all projects, especially the translation of the Bible into modern Ukrainian, the Bible Day project, work in secondary schools and universities, and for the construction of a new Bible House in Kiev.

Activity Corner: “Prayer Circle”

Supplies needed: Slips of paper, pens.

Gather family members for devotions. Beforehand, ask each person to write a prayer request on a slip of paper. Begin by singing “Sweet Hour of Prayer,” “God Answers Prayer in the Morning” or some other song on prayer. Circulate the prayer requests. Have everyone pray out loud on behalf of someone other than himself/herself. Conclude by asking everyone to pray The Lord’s Prayer together.