

Prayer for Illumination

Let' pray.

O Lord, Our God. You are our all in all and all good. Your people who are longing for Your favor and love are eager to receive Your instructions. Comfort us with Your Word and fill our spirit abundantly with Your grace. Help us to recognize Your will as we listen to Your Word and to obey Your will completely. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Scripture reading (New International Version)

(Exodus 14:10-14) ¹⁰ As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" ¹³ Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God).

(Acts 20:28) ²⁸Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

This is also the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God).

Sermon

I'm glad to meet you in the name of Jesus Christ.

First of all I thank God for giving me an opportunity to share His Word with you, and I also thank Pastor Bob, the session and all of you at APC. I would like to say something personal. Some 60 years ago your grandparents, your parents, your uncles and aunts, your husbands and wives sacrificed themselves in order to protect South Korea from the North Korean communists. I really appreciate what they have done. That was why I attended the Veteran's Day ceremony in Altavista's YMCA last November. I thank God once again for this precious time together with you today.

Now by the grace of God what I would like to share with you is Christian living. You and I have grown up in different surroundings, and our cultures and languages are different. But the God that you believe is my God, and the Lord that I believe is your Lord, so we can talk about Christian living as the same Christians.

What is Christian living? I am sure each one of you has his or her own definition for it.

I would like to define Christian living as the life concentrating on God, that is, spiritual concentration. It is the life that we live and are always conscious of God. It is like a couple keeping each other in mind all the time.

As I worship with you here at APC, I have discovered a common denominator between our church back home and APC. Do you know what it is? It is the word of blessing: "The Lord be with you." Who is the Lord? He is the God that you and I believe. He is the God of Israel who were frightened as they were sandwiched between the Red Sea and the Egyptian Army. He is the God who spoke through Moses.

I am reading from the Today's English Version.
"Don't be afraid! Stand your ground, and you will see what the LORD will do to save you today; you will never see these Egyptians again. The LORD will fight for you, and all you have to do is keep still."

Through Moses God says "stand your ground, and all you have to do is keep still." This means that we must be conscious of and concentrate on the fact that God is working and fighting for us. The people of Israel who were between the Red Sea and the Egyptian Army were not conscious of God who led them by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night and they did not concentrate on God. When the people of God do not concentrate on God, they cannot be led by God. However, believers who concentrate on God receive God's leading without fail. It is what happened to Moses. Moses was always conscious of and concentrated on God. And Moses followed God when God spoke to him. We learn how to concentrate on God through the life of Moses.

First, I would like to share the story of our Korean Church, Hae Sung Presbyterian Church in Korea, which came into being as we have concentrated on God and developed for the last ten years. It was September 1999 when my wife and I started our church at our apartment in Haeundae, Pusan. Actually three of us started the church and the third person is God. Many people around us urged us not to start a church. Some people said that starting a church is like breaking a rock with an egg. I received an offer to pastor a large church, and also received a few invitations to be a senior pastor at some stable churches, but I refused. Because as I concentrated on God, He wanted the way we took. And the reason we went to Pusan is what God spoke to us when I attended seminary in Korea. We invited our unbelieving neighbors home and treated them with homemade pizzas and donuts, talked with them and befriended them. We shared the Gospel, told them Bible stories, and counseled them as they brought their daily problems. The time when we started our church was right after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) crisis in Korea (This is similar to the Great Depression), and due to economic difficulties many households experienced hardship and collapsed. We accommodated such families, led them to the Lord by praying for them and studying the Bible together. It's just like parents nourishing their children. Some relationships between husbands and wives were restored, and some relationships with their children improved. The church started by my wife and me (and of course, God) grew year after year and now the average Sunday attendance is about 80. As the number in attendance increased, we moved to a bigger place twice, but we are unable to afford to have our own church building and currently we are renting and using a space in a big building. The space is about the size of the APC sanctuary, and half of it is used for worship and the other half for children.

It has been over 10 years since my wife and I started the new church, and we were mentally and physically burned out. The God who told us to start a new church wanted us to rest. We wanted to spend our sabbatical rest in Boston. We thought about visiting Ivy League schools and preparing for a mission school which is one of our visions. However, God led us to Lynchburg and wanted us to benchmark* the Liberty community. [*to study (as a competitor's product or business practices) in order to improve the performance of one's own company] So we surfed Korean community websites at Liberty. Last April at the site bulletin board we spotted a rent ad in Altavista, a distance about 20 minutes away from Lynchburg. When we saw the ad, we were convinced that this was the place God prepared for us. About 5 months after we first saw the ad, we called to find out if the place was still available, and we were told that it was, so we moved to the place last October and we are living comfortably now. As we live here, we are certain that God has led us where we are now. We began to like Altavista. We like our peaceful, kind and wonderful neighbors. We enjoy spending time at the YMCA. Above all, we are extremely happy that we got acquainted with APC and have an opportunity to meet you. We have recovered mentally and physically a lot and are preparing to go back home. Now when we go back, our foremost task is to secure needed space for our church. The problem is that our church is not financially able to acquire a lot to build our own church. Land value around our church is too high for us and we are concentrating our prayer to God about this matter. As you pray for our church, it would be wonderful if you could pray for us and extend a helping hand.

Secondly, what we would like to accomplish before we leave Altavista is, if possible, to establish an exchange program for young people in your church or community. What we have in mind is for Korean young people to come to the States during their summer or winter vacation and as they stay for a few weeks, they would experience a different culture, language and life style. This experience would no doubt help them to understand and adjust to a new environment, and would provide an opportunity to widen their world view. Of course, American young people could visit Korean homes.

Thirdly, God has given us another vision. This is the vision for our church as well. It is to establish a mission school. The population of Pusan is about 3.8 million, but only about 8 % are Christians. Pusan is the second largest city in Korea, but compared to 20% of Koreans being Christians nationwide, the number of 8% Christians in Pusan is much too small. There are many so called many mission schools in Korea, but they do not function as mission schools. Every school is eager to prepare their students to go to college, and the biblical education is on the backburner. Our desire is that through a mission school we raise up students with a Christian world view and as they go out in different social sectors or fields, they can live a life to serve their neighbors and society. Our vision for a mission school is like the situation the Israelites were in, between the Red Sea and the Egyptian Army. It's like breaking a rock with an egg. However, as Moses concentrated on God, we would like to take this matter to God. We would appreciate it if you would concentrate on this matter also.

I believe I am the first Korean pastor preaching at APC in its centennial history, am I not? I must confess that this is my first preaching experience in an American church. We are sharing "firsts." It's called the first connection. I hope that our first connection is a good starting point and that we will continue to develop our relationship. It would be nice if APC

and our Korean Church could be linked in the Lord and become sister churches, and accomplish a lot for God. Personally this would be a great encouragement for me and would be glad tidings for our Korean Church congregation. We will be leaving March 22nd. Even after we leave here, my wife and I will not forget Altavista and the warm, kind and cordial fellowship with you. I pray that when we meet again we would be the people of God who concentrate on God more and more, and do the work of God.

Closing prayer

Let's pray.

God of abundant love and grace, we thank you for saving us and giving us visions. Like Moses, may the people in APC and Hae Sung Church in Korea concentrate on you and live a purpose-driven life. Even though we may encounter hardship, help us to remember you who control all circumstances, and concentrate on you to the end. Glory be to You, O God who started APC a century ago. Continue to receive glory until your Son Jesus comes back to this earth. May Hae Sung Church in Korea also be a church that reveals your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen

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