

THE POWER OF PRAYER – Pt.2

Praying According To God's Will

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I. Introductory Remarks.

1 John 5:14-15 *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*

Matthew 21:22 *"And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."*

In this series of messages we are looking at the power of prayer that comes from having confidence that God really hears us. In the first message I talked about the importance of having a prepared heart before the Lord – that when our hearts are properly prepared we can have great confidence in our prayer life.

In this message, I want to focus on the power of prayer we can have by praying in and according to God's will and purpose. As I read through the Bible I am continually impressed with the accounts of prayer that I see were answered in powerful ways because men and women prayed according to God's will.

II. Examples of Prayer According to God's Will.

1. Peter Being Released From Prison By An Angel.

One example that comes to mind is the time when Peter was in prison for preaching the gospel and an Angel appeared to him and helped him make the greatest jail break known to mankind. What was it that brought about this great deliverance?

Acts 12:11-12 *And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people." So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.*

2. Paul and Silas in Prison.

Acts 16:25-26 *But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great*

earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

3. Elijah and the Prophets of Baal.

1 Kings 18:37-39 *"Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"*

In these three illustrations we must ask ourselves, "What is the common dominator?" What was it about their lives and their prayer that caused God to respond in such a powerful manifestation?

I believe all of these illustrations reveal that these were people with a kingdom mindset. They were able to see beyond themselves and their own need to the needs of the kingdom. They were not only praying in accordance with God's will and purpose, but they were also living their lives according to His will and pleasure. As a result the needs of the kingdom became their needs and God answered in powerful demonstrations of His power and might.

III. We Can Achieve The Same Results.

The Bible says that we can achieve the same results as these people did. We are made out of the same stuff they were. The same principles of faith that worked in their lives work in our lives as well. Therefore we must follow their example if we want to see powerful results when we pray.

James 5:13-18 *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*

We should examine ourselves and ask....

....why do I want to be healed?
....why do I want God to bless my finances?
....why do I need this or that? You fill in the blanks.

Is it for furthering God's purpose and His kingdom in the earth or is to simply consume it upon your own lusts?

James 4:2-3 *You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Are we spending God's blessings on our own pleasures or are we investing His blessings to further His will and purpose in the earth.

1 John 5:14-15 *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*

You say, "Yea that's great, but what about my needs and desires?" "When do they get met" "If I spend all my time praying about the kingdom when is God going to find time to meet my needs. I believe Solomon, the great man of wisdom, can answer this question for us.

1 Kings 3:9-11 *"Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice... (See vs 5-13 for whole context)*

Because Solomon was focused on the needs of the Kingdom, the Lord gave him both riches and honor. This is precisely the counsel that Jesus gives us in his great sermon on the mount.

Jesus answered this question as well.

Matthew 6:31-33 *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 'For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be*

added to you.

IV. Review Of Prior Illustrations.

Let's go back and review the first three illustrations and see what we can learn about their devotion to God's purpose and will and how they were praying in accordance with God's will.

1. Peter in Jail.

Prior to Peter landing in Jail he was very devoted to the kingdom message and the spreading of the Gospel. He was a major voice in the early church as they filled Jerusalem with the doctrine of Jesus Christ. He was responsible for leading the Gentiles into the kingdom and continued to be devoted throughout his life to the needs of the kingdom and eventually died as a martyr for Jesus Christ, being crucified upside down. He was a kingdom person fully devoted to God's will and purpose, and a man who continually prayed in accordance with God's will.

2. Paul & Silas in Prison.

As a result of Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns, the jailer and his whole family were brought to the Lord. Paul was one of the greatest ambassadors of the great commission and the kingdom of God since the birth of the Church. He was also a kingdom person fully devoted to God's will and purpose and said at the end of his life, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

3. Elijah & the Prophets of Baal.

Elijah's prayer was that the people may know *"You are the Lord."* This was his motivation for taking on the prophets of Baal. He wanted to see the kingdom expressed in its fullness in the land of Israel. He was a man with a kingdom focus and perspective and allowed God to lead him accordingly.

Our personal lives as well as the corporate body, the church, must be equally dedicated to God's purpose found in Matthew 28:18 and Matthew 24:14 if we are to experience dynamic and powerful results when God calls us to pray in these ways.

Matthew 28:18-20 *Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of*

the Holy Spirit, 20"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Matthew 24:14*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

We all have our personal callings and ministries that must evolve around this purpose. As a church we have a corporate vision and purpose statement that is focused on fulfilling God's purpose for our lives.

"Our purpose is to attract and win lost souls and the unchurched to Christ; to develop individuals who have a desire to follow Christ into maturity; to equip, encourage and prepare them for their ministry in the Body of Christ, that they may have a life that will glorify God and be filled with His abundance."

V. Practicalities of Praying According to God's Will.

1. Have a lifestyle that is focused on God's will and purpose.

James 4:13-17 *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

2. Get involved in the corporate vision of the church and begin to pray accordingly.

Matthew 18:19-20 *"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."*

3. Maintain a devotional life that keeps you focused on God's will and purpose in your daily lives rather than your own immediate needs and goals.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *pray without ceasing...*

4. Understand that there are seasons in which God calls you to prayer and fasting in which He reveals His burden for you in intercessory prayer.

Seasons of intercessory prayer are different than our everyday devotional life. This is more of a time of deep intercession praying for specific needs that God brings to your attention.

Ephesians 6:18-19...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel...

5. Pray in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit...

1 Corinthians 14:2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

VI. Concluding Remarks.

I believe we the people of God will see some dramatic results in the years ahead as we begin to focus more acutely on God's will and purpose and praying accordingly. Let's believe God together for great things as we commit ourselves to a deeper level of prayer and intercession by praying according to His will and purpose. Remember confidence in prayer is a result of asking Him for things that are according to His will. This is what gets His attention. When we do this He takes care of all of our needs according to His riches.