

The Power of Prayer – Pt.1

Preparing Our Hearts

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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.*

How many of us lack confidence when we pray? We pray out of duty with very little anticipation of anything really changing or happening. Does this sound like your prayer life? Would you like to see it change? If so, I want to give you some faith principles that will revolutionize the way you pray and the results you get.

God really desires to answer our prayers and to give us the things that we are often in need of, but so often we sense that God is far from us and doesn't really care what is going on in our lives. I believe God really does care for us and desires to answer our prayers in a way that brings glory and honor unto His name.

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

Isaiah 65:24 *It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.*

What are some of the things we can do to have a more fervent and effective prayer life that gets the kind of answers that we desire? In this message we will begin to find some of these answers as we look at the power of prayer that comes from having a properly prepared heart. We will find that it is through a properly prepared heart that God is able to hear us. Let's begin by looking at some Biblical examples of powerful prayers with dynamic results.

II. The Biblical Example of Samuel – 1 Samuel 7:1-17.

1. Samuel Prays For Israel's Deliverance From The Philistines.

In this passage of scripture we find the Israelites gathered together at Mizpah, where the Philistines are ready to come against them, but the Israelites cry out to the Lord and the Lord hears them and confuses the Philistines so that they are defeated. Samuel was able to bring Israel into a position where their hearts

were properly prepared before God and as a result He prayed with authority and got some powerful results.

1 Samuel 7:9-10 *And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel.*

2. Israel's Preparations of the Heart.

There were several things in this passage of scripture that caused the Lord to respond to them the way He did. We find these in verses 3-4 & 6-7.

1 Samuel 7:3-4 *Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.*

Several things are mentioned in this passage:

- **Repentance or turning to the Lord with a whole heart** – *"If you return to the LORD with all your hearts - Verse 3".*

One of the major keys to getting God to answer our prayers is to first of all get Him to listen to our requests. It takes a sincere heart of repentance before God turns His ear towards us.

Isaiah 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.*

Too often our repentance is only a half hearted response to God, but if we are going to have a powerful prayer life like Samuel and others we must come to God with a whole hearted response.

Psalms 119:2 *Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!*

Psalms 119:145 *I cry out with my whole heart; Hear me, O LORD! I will keep Your statutes.*

- **Separation from idols and all that is ungodly** – *"put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you - Verse 3"*.

2 Corinthians 6:16-18 *And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters...*

Are the worldly and unclean things in your life worth the many unanswered prayers that you never receive? To come into a relationship with the Father that allows Him to hear the prayers of our hearts is to deny ourselves the many fleshly and worldly idols that exalt themselves against God. A powerful prayer life with powerful results will cost us our worldly pleasures.

- **Preparation of the heart for the Lord** – *"prepare your hearts for the LORD - Verse 3"*.

Hosea 10:12 *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.*

Joel 2:12-13 *"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.*

I believe a properly prepared heart involves a real godly sorrow and brokenness over our sins against God. We must allow Him to break up the fallow ground of our hearts through godly sorrow.

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 *For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted... What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!...*

- **A commitment to serve Him only** – *"and serve Him only - Verse 3"*.

James 4:8 *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

James 1:7-8 *For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

- **Obedience to what the Lord was commanding them** – *"So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only – Verse 4".*

1 John 3:22 *And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*

- **Confession of their sins** – *"We have sinned against the Lord - Vs 6."*

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

- **The sacrificial lamb for the atonement of their sins** – *"And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord - Vs 9.*

1 Corinthians 5:7 *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

When we have properly cleansed our hearts from all sin by confessing and repenting with whole hearts we can come boldly to the throne of grace with confidence that God is going to hear us and answer our prayers in a powerful way.

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

3. The Answered Prayer.

1 Samuel 7:10-11 *Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines...*

4. The Prayer of Thanksgiving - The Place of Remembrance.

1 Samuel 7:12 *Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."*

III. Concluding Remarks.

I believe God wants to move in a powerful and dynamic way in our lives, but He is patiently waiting for us to prepare our hearts in a way that brings glory and honor unto His name.

James 5:16-18...*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.*